

SPAWN

20TH

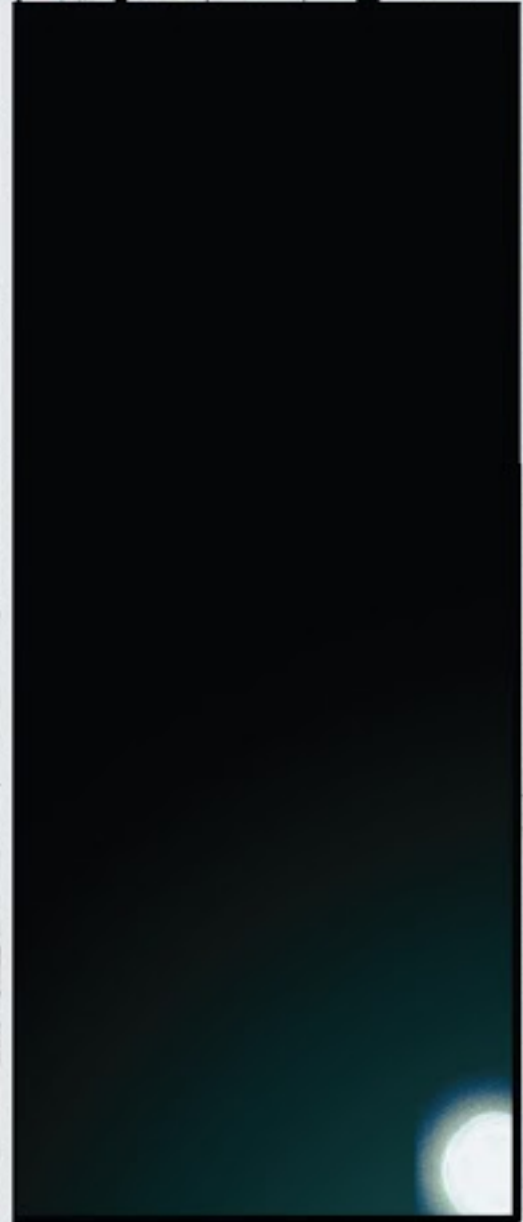


SH*#.

M'FARLANE
+fco

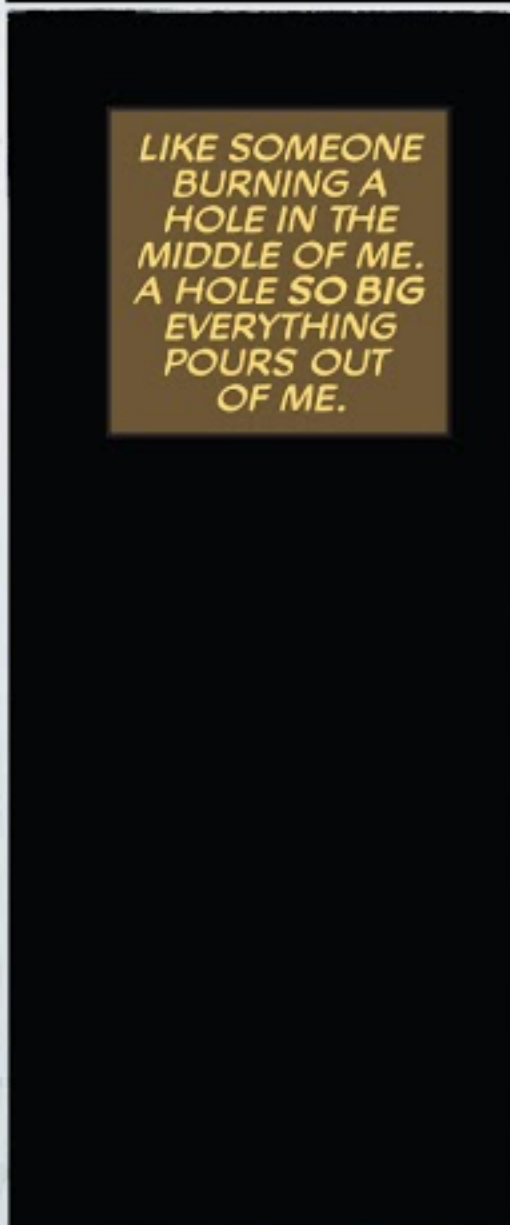


I REMEMBER
THE PAIN. THEN...
THE LIGHT.

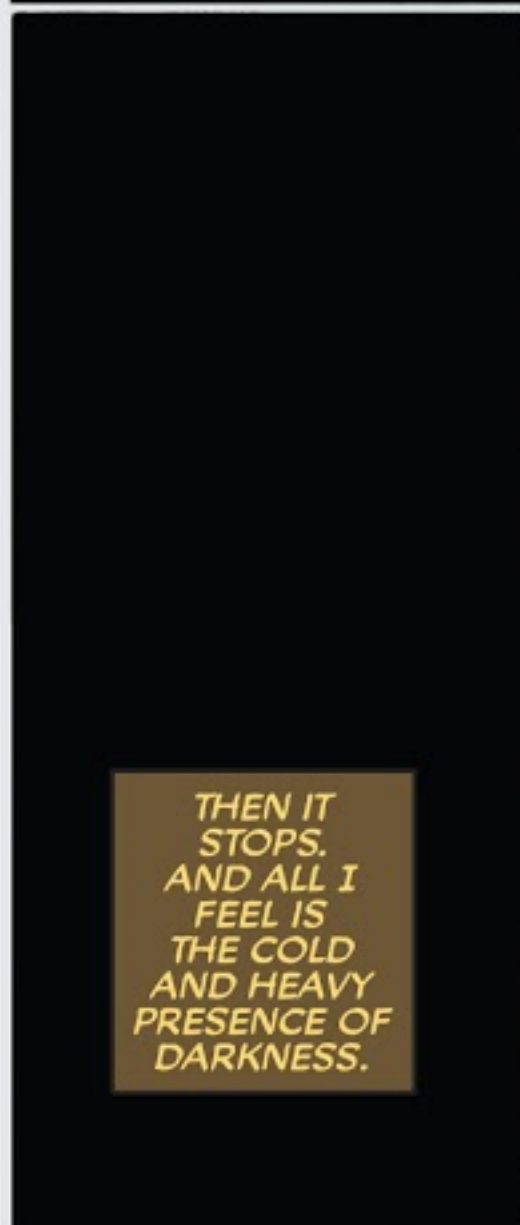


I WISH
I KNEW...
WHY?!

LIKE SOMEONE
BURNING A
HOLE IN THE
MIDDLE OF ME.
A HOLE SO BIG
EVERYTHING
POURS OUT
OF ME.



THEN IT
STOPS.
AND ALL I
FEEL IS
THE COLD
AND HEAVY
PRESENCE OF
DARKNESS.



WHY IS IT SO
GODDAMN
HARD TO
REMEMBER
THINGS?



INSTEAD I'VE GOT
EVERYBODY ELSE
FEEDING ME CRAP
ABOUT MY PAST.
EVEN THOUGH NONE
OF THEM WERE
AROUND WHEN
WHATEVER IT IS
THAT HAPPENED TO
ME... ACTUALLY
HAPPENED!

THE OBVIOUS PART IS I'VE
'CHANGED'-- BUT HOW?!
AND WHY? IT'S JUST A
BUNCH OF SCATTERED
IMAGES. I CAN'T PIECE
ANY OF IT TOGETHER. AND
EVERY TIME I CLOSE MY
EYES ALL I FEEL IS PAIN.





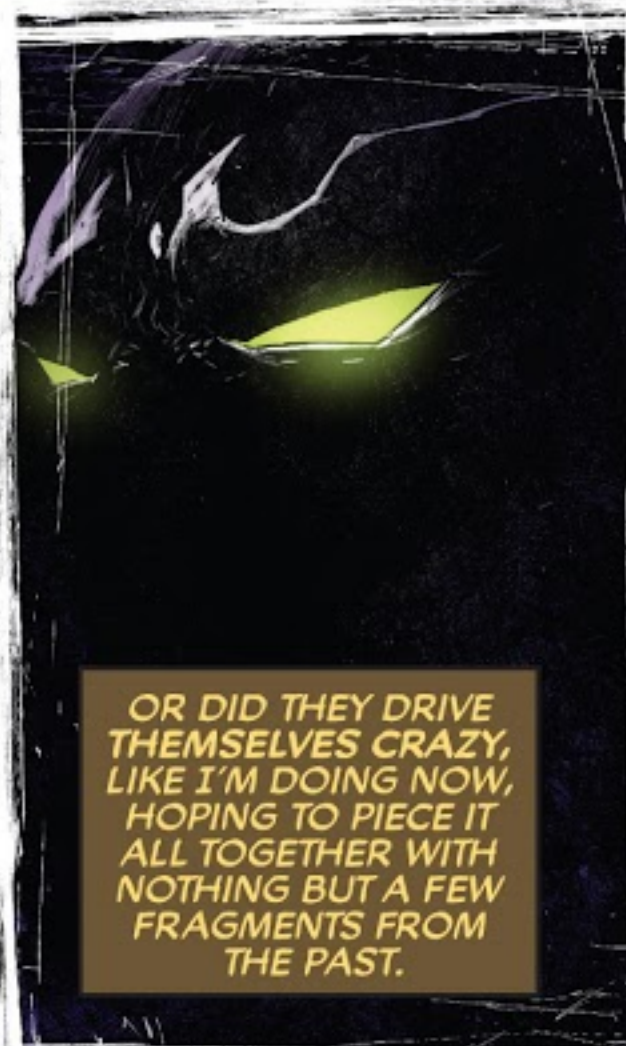
EVERY NIGHT IT WAS THE
SAME. PAIN. LIGHT. COLD.
DARKNESS. AGAIN AND
AGAIN, UNTIL IT FINALLY
WOKE ME FROM MY COMA.

MAYBE THAT'S WHY I BARELY
SLEEP AT NIGHT-- MAYBE I
WASN'T SUPPOSED TO WAKE UP.
MAYBE I WAS SUPPOSED TO
STAY WHERE IT'S BLACK.

LIKE THE OTHERS.



I WONDER IF
THEY WENT
THROUGH THIS,
TOO? TRYING TO
FIGURE OUT WHO
THEY WERE.



OR DID THEY DRIVE
THEMSELVES CRAZY,
LIKE I'M DOING NOW,
HOPING TO PIECE IT
ALL TOGETHER WITH
NOTHING BUT A FEW
FRAGMENTS FROM
THE PAST.





WE BEGIN TONIGHT'S NEWSCAST WITH THE SAME UNRESOLVED QUESTION WE HAVE BEEN ASKING SINCE THIS REMARKABLE INDIVIDUAL CAME INTO THE PUBLIC'S AWARENESS...
"WHO IS JIM DOWNING?"

FOR THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS, NEARLY EVERY NEWS OUTLET IN THIS COUNTRY HAS ATTEMPTED TO PROVIDE INFORMATION ON HIS PAST. OUR OWN ORGANIZATION HAS HAD A TEAM OF JOURNALISTS TRYING TO TRACK DOWN ANY DETAIL, ANY CLUE AS TO MR. DOWNING'S PAST. TO DATE, NO ONE HAS BEEN ABLE TO FIND ANYTHING, A FACT YOU'RE READING OR HEARING ABOUT WITH MORE AND MORE FREQUENCY.

GIVEN HIS NEAR MIRACULOUS ACTIONS AND SEEMINGLY IMPOSSIBLE SURVIVAL FROM A CLOSE RANGE ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT, ONE WOULD PRESUME THAT ANY PERSON WIELDING THE INCREDIBLE POWERS THAT HE SEEMS TO POSSESS WOULD HAVE A STREAM OF PEOPLE COMING FORWARD WITH BACKGROUND INFORMATION. SHOCKINGLY, NO PERSON OR DOCUMENT HAS SURFACED TO GIVE ANY INDICATION THAT THIS NEW 'SAVIOR' DIDN'T JUST APPEAR OUT OF THIN AIR.



IN THIS DAY AND AGE, WITH SO MUCH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SURROUNDING US EVERY MINUTE, HOW CAN THE SEARCH FOR A SINGLE MAN'S IDENTITY BE SO COMPLETELY DEVOID OF ANY CLUES?! IT SEEMS IMPROBABLE. YET THAT IS WHAT WE ARE FACING WITH MR. DOWNING TODAY. AS MILLIONS OF PEOPLE AROUND THE GLOBE CONTINUE TO INSIST THAT HE IS NONE OTHER THAN JESUS HIMSELF-- THOSE OF US LOOKING FOR MORE PRACTICAL ANSWERS MIGHT SOON BE JOINING THE ZEALOT BLOGGERS IN CONCLUDING THAT IF NO NEWS AGENCY, GOVERNMENT INSTITUTION OR CITIZEN CAN TELL US WHERE HE CAME FROM, THEN THE ONLY POSSIBLE CONCLUSION IS THAT HE *DID* SIMPLY APPEAR 'OUT OF THE HEAVENS.'

AND THE THOUGHT THAT GOD'S ONLY SON MIGHT TRULY BE WALKING AMONG US IS SUCH A STAGGERING DEVELOPMENT THAT MOST OF US CAN'T EVEN COMPREHEND WHAT THAT MIGHT ACTUALLY MEAN FOR AMERICA AND THE REST OF THE WORLD.

WHY NOW? WHY, AFTER ALL THIS TIME, AFTER ALL THE PRAYERS AND PLEAS FOR GOD TO SHOW ANY SIGN OF HIS EXISTENCE, WOULD THIS MAN BE THE ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION *NOW*? SHOULD WE JUST MAKE OUR LEAP OF FAITH AND ACCEPT IT, OR SHOULD WE BE ALARMED THAT SOMEONE WITH HIS ABILITIES DOESN'T KNOW WHO HE IS HIMSELF?



SO, YOU'RE TELLING ME THAT IN THIS DAY AND AGE, WITH ALL THE MODERN MARVELS OF TECHNOLOGY AT OUR FINGERTIPS-- SMART PHONES, FACIAL RECOGNITION SOFTWARE, 24-HOUR NEWS-- THE ALMOST ENDLESS REACH OF THE WORLDWIDE WEB-- THAT NOT ONE SINGLE PERSON HAS *ANY* IDEA AS TO *WHO THIS MAN IS?!!*

I'M NOT FALLING FOR THAT!

YOU WANT TO CONVINCE YOURSELF THAT JIM DOWNING IS THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST... THEN *GO RIGHT AHEAD!* IT'S A FREE COUNTRY! BUT YOU KEEP YOUR RADICAL, LIBERAL OPINIONS TO YOURSELF BECAUSE I REFUSE TO BELIEVE THAT THE PERSON I WAS *RAISED* TO BELIEVE IN IS NOW THIS *BLOND HAIRED SURFER BUM!*

THE BIBLE *I* READ MADE NO INDICATION THAT JESUS WOULD RETURN TO EARTH AND RANDOMLY USE HIS POWERS ONLY WHEN HE FELT LIKE IT. *OR WORSE* ... THAT HE WOULD SOMEHOW BE EMBARRASSED TO EVEN ACKNOWLEDGE HE HAD THEM! *NO!* WHAT JESUS WOULD DO IS COME BACK TO EARTH AND SHOW EVERY PERSON ON THE PLANET THAT THERE'S ONLY ONE GOD AND ONE RELIGION, AND *HE WOULD UNITE US!* NOT HIDE FROM US OR COWER AWAY WHENEVER WE WANTED TO TAKE HIS PICTURE.

THAT'S NOT A MESSIAH... THAT'S A FRAUD! YOU CAN TELL HIM I SAID SO!

THIS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, IS ANOTHER CONSPIRACY COOKED UP BY THE LEFT LEANING SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT IN THE HOPES OF GETTING US TO BE SUBMISSIVE WITHOUT ANY CRITICAL THINKING! I'VE SEEN THIS TRICK BEFORE-- THOUGH NOT TO THESE *ABSURD LEVELS*-- AND IT'S *NOT* GOING TO WORK!



BUT THE PAIN-- IT ISN'T BLOCKING EVERYTHING OUT NOW. I'M STARTING TO 'SEE' MORE OF THE PAST. MORE GLIMPSES.



AND SOME OF IT... I... I ACTUALLY FEEL MIGHT BE TRUE.



THAT, SOMEHOW, MY AMBITIONS GAVE ME POWER OVER OTHERS. AND IN MY SEARCH FOR SOME GLORIOUS DISCOVERY-- SOME SCIENTIFIC BREAK-THROUGH-- I TEAMED WITH MEN WHOSE RUTHLESS CUNNING WAS THEIR STRONGEST ATTRIBUTE.



WE MANIPULATED PEOPLE. EXPERIMENTED ON THEIR BODIES. DISTORTED THEM THROUGH SCIENCE.

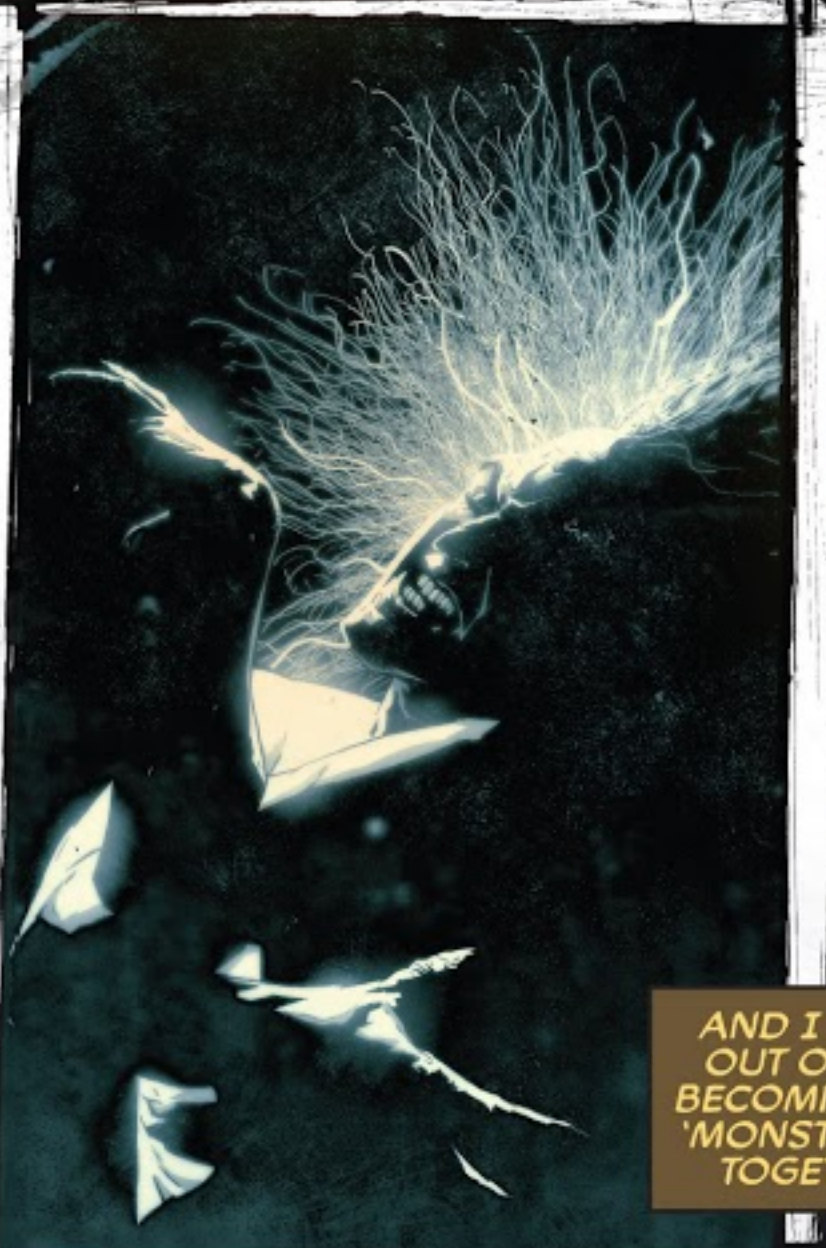
AND THEY SUFFERED. GOD, HOW THEY SUFFERED!



WHY? BECAUSE I NEEDED SOME FEELING OF GLORY? BECAUSE I NEEDED THE MONEY?



NO!-- IT WAS PERFECTION! THAT'S WHAT I CRAVED.



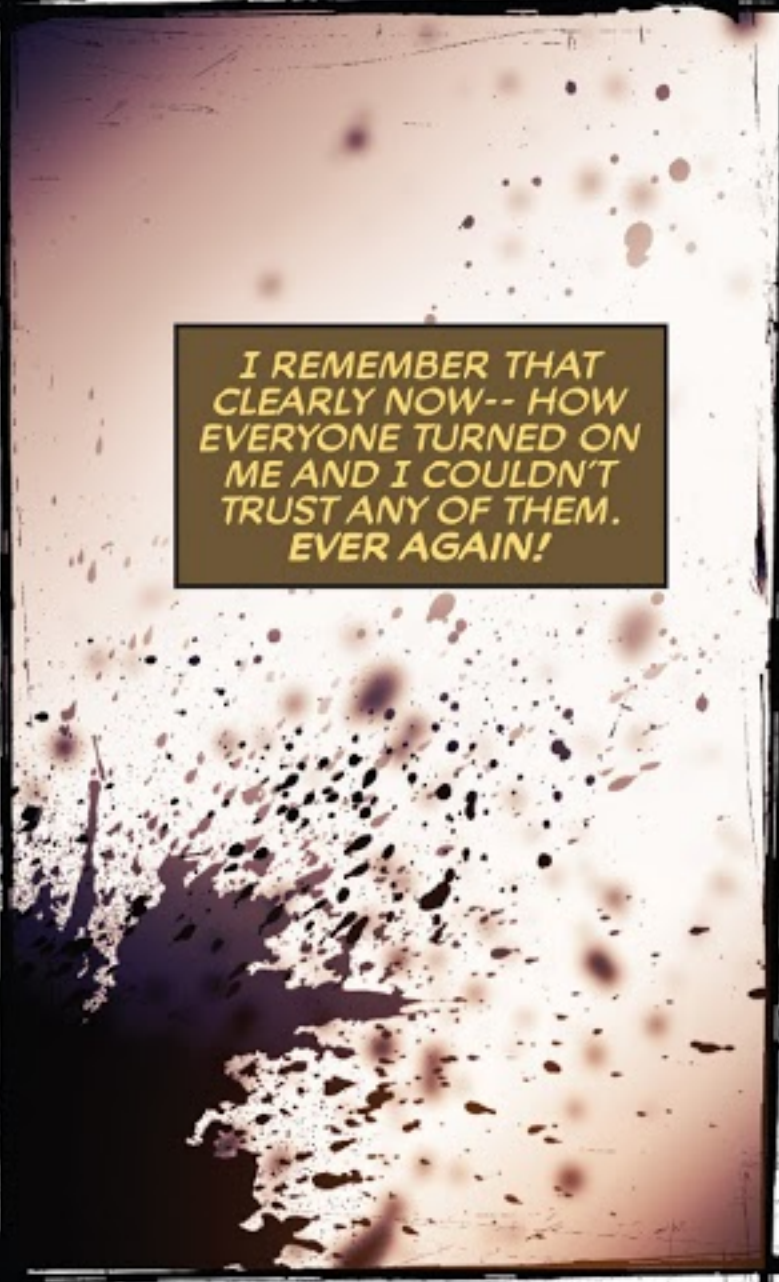
AND I TOOK THAT DESIRE OUT ON OTHER HUMANS, BECOMING THE CREATOR OF 'MONSTERS.' PUTTING THEM TOGETHER ONE BY ONE.



BUT THEY ALL FAILED!



EVERY LAST
ONE OF THEM.



I REMEMBER THAT
CLEARLY NOW-- HOW
EVERYONE TURNED ON
ME AND I COULDN'T
TRUST ANY OF THEM.
EVER AGAIN!

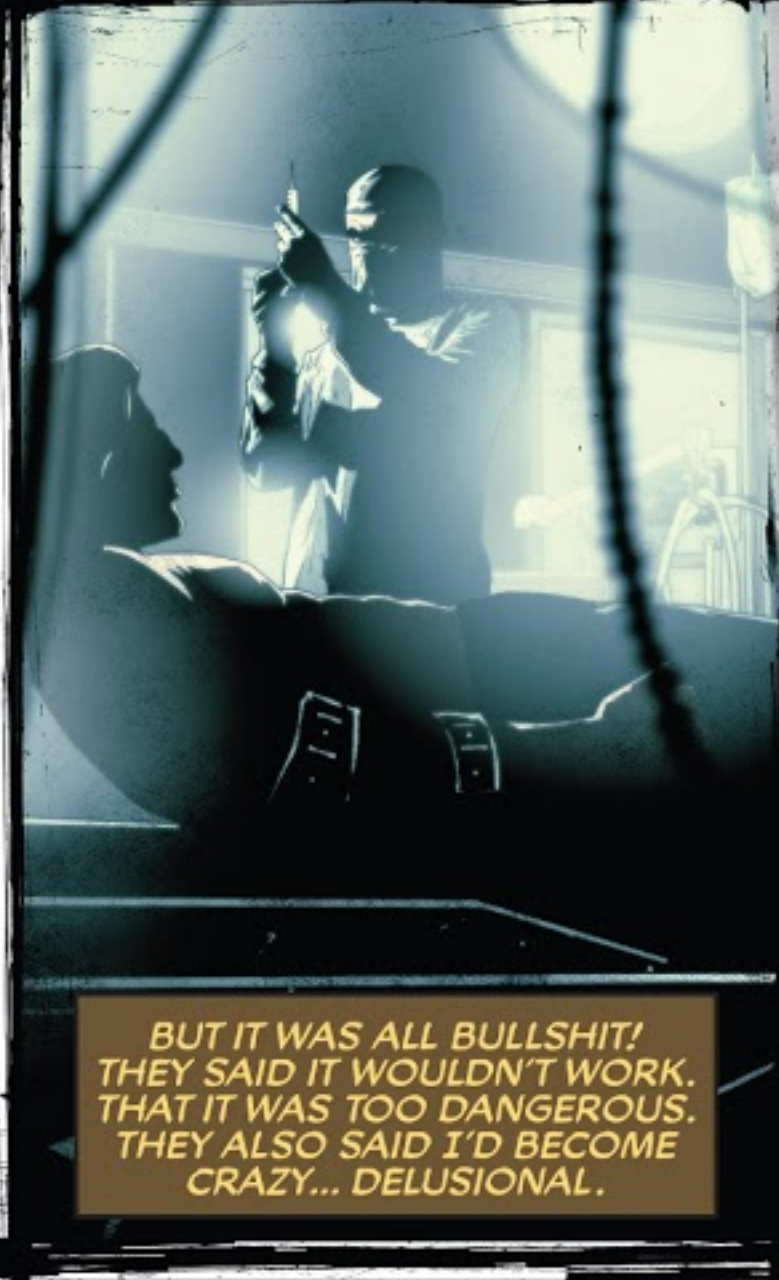


PROJECT
RAGNOROK
CANCELLED

SO I STOLE IT. ALL THE
SECRETS THEY'D BEEN
HIDING FROM ME.



EVEN FROM
THOSE THAT SAID
THEY "LOVED ME."



BUT IT WAS ALL BULLSHIT!
THEY SAID IT WOULDN'T WORK.
THAT IT WAS TOO DANGEROUS.
THEY ALSO SAID I'D BECOME
CRAZY... DELUSIONAL.



WHY? BECAUSE
THEY WERE JEALOUS.
THEY KNEW THEY'D
NEVER BE PERFECT.
NOT LIKE ME!

NOT LIKE ME.

AND THAT'S WHEN IT BEGAN...

PAIN.

LIGHT.

COLD.

DARKNESS.



IT'S ALL I CAN REMEMBER NOW.

THAT AND THE FACE
OF A STRANGER.



THEN NOTHING.

NOTHING BUT
TOTAL BLACK.
GOD KNOWS
HOW LONG I'D
BEEN THERE.
A YEAR? TWO?
MAYBE EVEN TEN.
NO ONE SEEMS
TO KNOW.

BUT I'M AWAKE NOW.
REBORN. SOMEHOW
ENDOWED WITH
POWERS SO STRONG
THEY CAN RESURRECT
THE DEAD.

AND INSTEAD OF
BEING AFRAID OF ME,
THE WORLD WANTS TO
CALL ME A 'MESSIAH'?
THEY WANT TO MAKE
ME INTO THEIR GLOBAL
CELEBRITY WITHOUT
ASKING IF THAT'S WHAT
I WANT. HALF THE
PEOPLE I KNOW STILL
THINK I'M JUST SOME
HUMAN HEALER.

SOME MYSTERY THEY
HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE
TO SOLVE YET.

THEY DON'T KNOW ABOUT
THE REST-- AND IF THEY DID,
THEY WOULDN'T KNOW WHAT
TO DO ABOUT IT ANYWAY.

DEMONS. ANGELS... SPAWNS.
THEY'RE ALL HERE UNDERNEATH
THEIR NOSES-- AND THE SCARY
PART IS THEY'RE COMPLETELY
UNAWARE OF IT.



0:0:0:5

I GUESS I WAS TOO.

EVEN BEFORE MY COMA THEY
MUST HAVE BEEN HERE. I MUST
HAVE BEEN AS BLIND AND
IGNORANT AS EVERYONE ELSE.

BUT NOT NOW.

NOW I'M FULLY AWAKE... AND I'VE
SEEN THEM. AND ALL THEY WANT TO
DO IS DESTROY US JUST SO THEY CAN
BEAT THE OTHER SIDE. HEAVEN. HELL.
NEITHER ONE GIVES A SHIT ABOUT
EARTH IF IT MEANS THEY CAN WIN
THEIR WAR AGAINST EACH OTHER.

WE'RE JUST A STEPPING STONE.
AN AFTERTHOUGHT. BUT THEY
MADE A MISTAKE.

A HUGE MISTAKE!

A dramatic comic book illustration of Spawn standing on a rooftop. He is wearing his signature black and white suit with a large white 'S' on the chest. His wings are spread wide, showing a dark, leathery texture. He has a menacing expression with glowing yellow eyes. In the background, a city skyline is visible under a dark, stormy sky. The overall tone is dark and intense.

BY GIVING ME
POWER!

I DON'T CARE WHAT
THEY WANT OR WHY!
THEY'RE DEAD!

IF ANY OF THEM TRIES TO HURT SARA
OR MARC OR SUSAN-- I SWEAR, I'LL
KILL EVERY LAST ONE OF THEM!

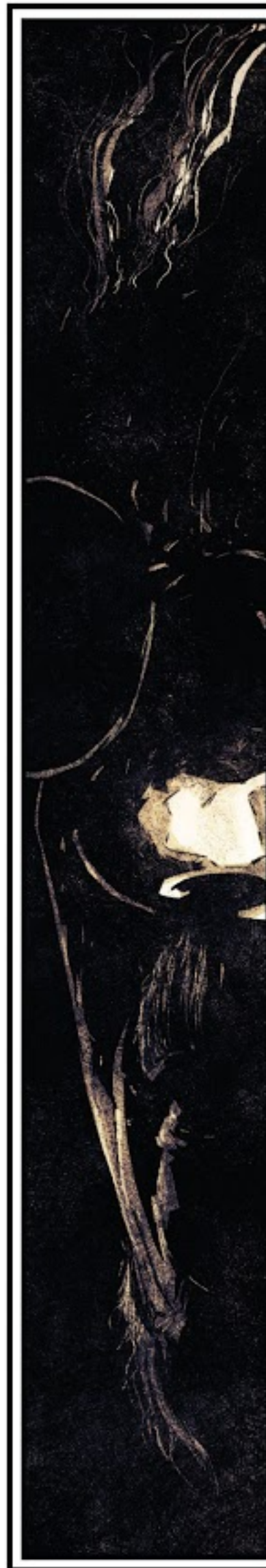
CLOWN SAID THEY WERE AFRAID OF ME--
THAT I'M SOME TICKING TIME BOMB OR SOME-
THING. FINE! LET THEM BE SCARED. MAYBE
THAT'LL KEEP THEM AWAY FOR A WHILE.

IF NOT... THEN LET 'EM COME! GOD, SATAN.
I DON'T CARE! I'LL TAKE THEM ALL ON!

WHATEVER THEY'VE MADE ME-- WHATEVER I'VE
BECOME-- THEY'LL SCREAM MY NAME BEFORE
THEY DIE! SPAWN! AND I'LL NEVER AGAIN BE...

THEIR GODDAMN

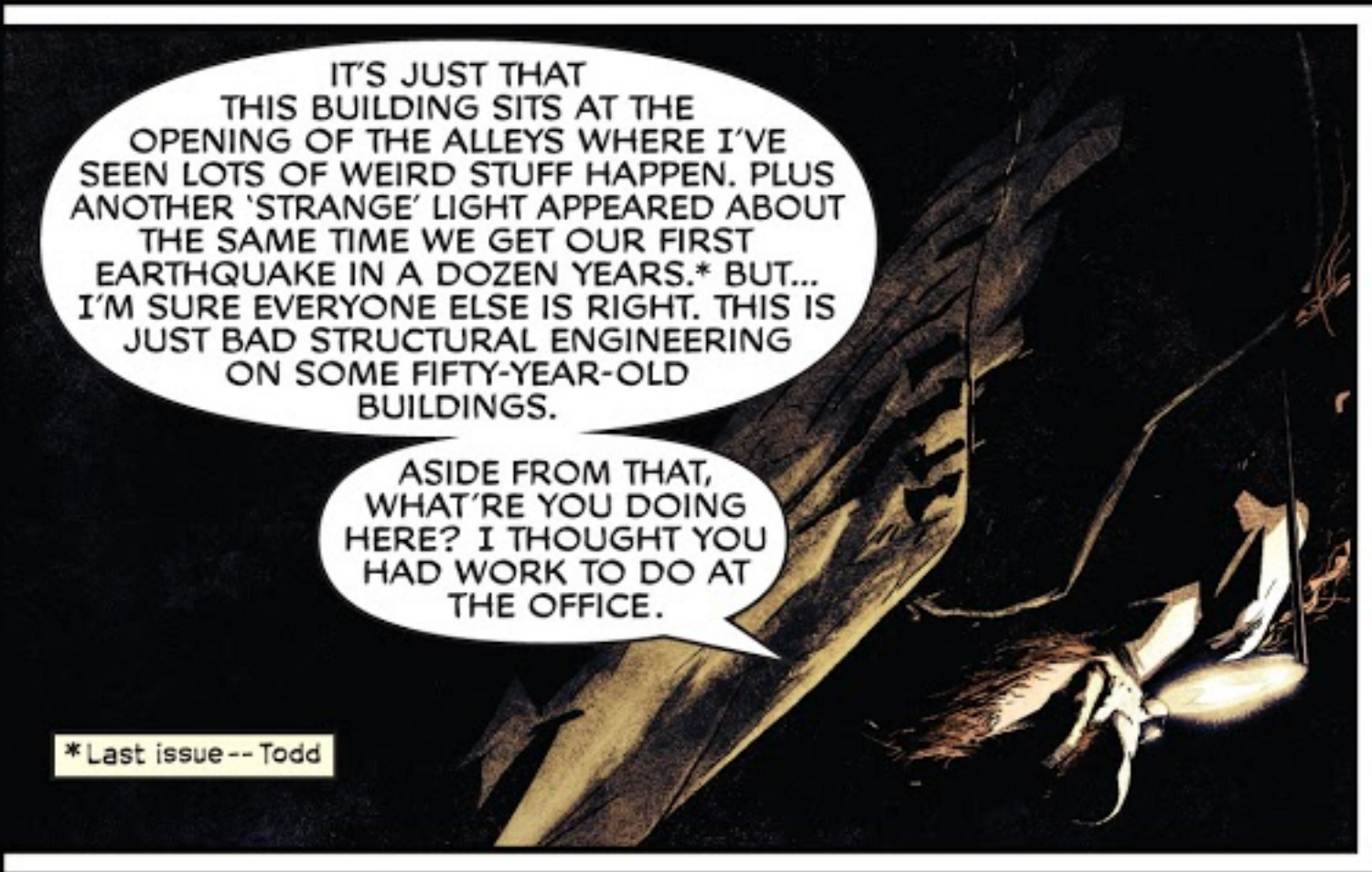
SPAWN



SO--
WHAT DO
YOU MAKE
OF THIS?

I DON'T KNOW.
SAME THING AS
EVERYONE ELSE-- AN
ABANDONED BUILDING
SUDDENLY COLLAPSES IN
A CRAPPY PART OF TOWN.
LUCKILY, NO ONE
WAS HURT.

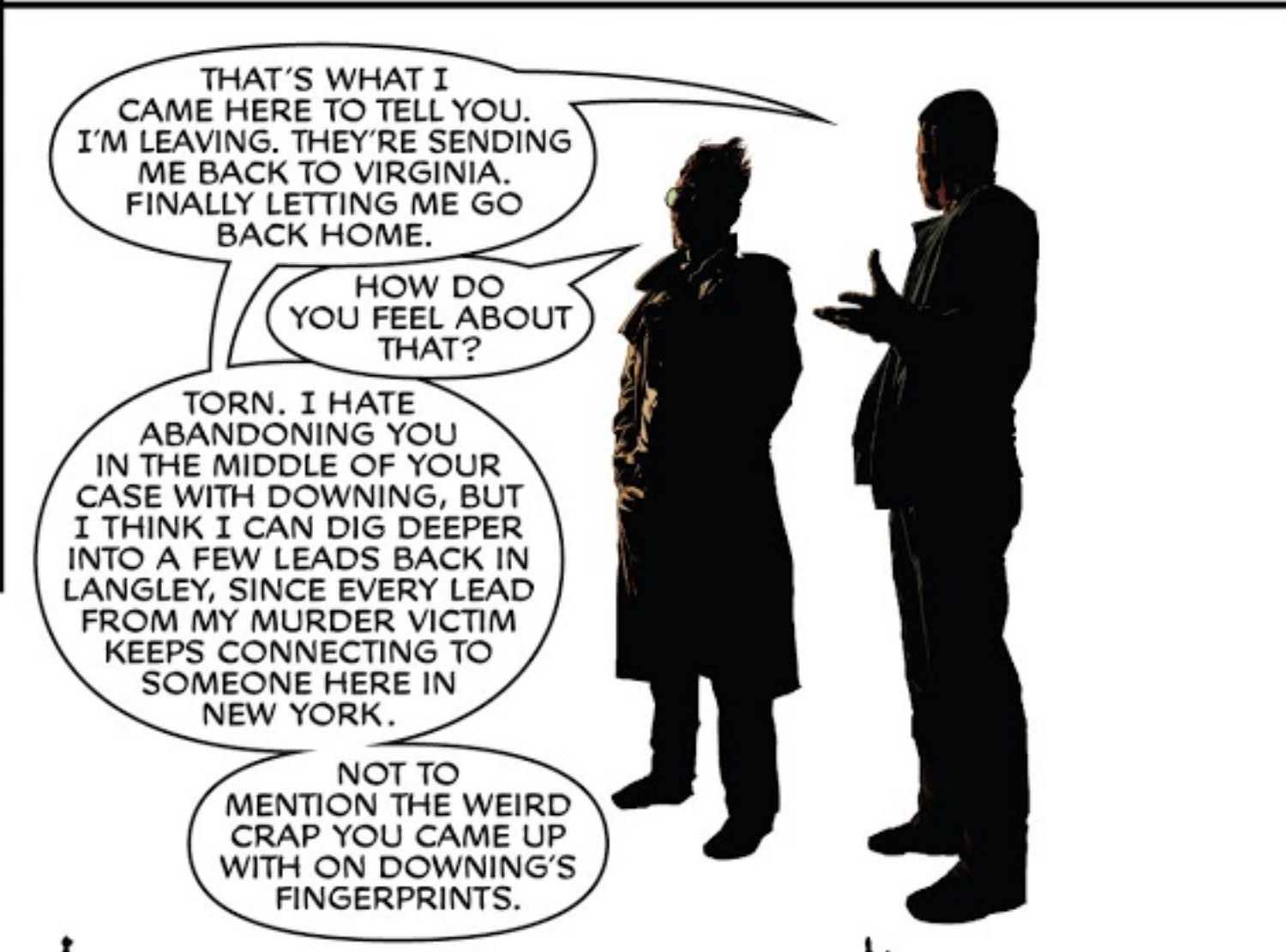
YEAH...
GUESS
YOU'RE RIGHT. I'M
OVERTHINKING
IT.



IT'S JUST THAT
THIS BUILDING SITS AT THE
OPENING OF THE ALLEYS WHERE I'VE
SEEN LOTS OF WEIRD STUFF HAPPEN. PLUS
ANOTHER 'STRANGE' LIGHT APPEARED ABOUT
THE SAME TIME WE GET OUR FIRST
EARTHQUAKE IN A DOZEN YEARS.* BUT...
I'M SURE EVERYONE ELSE IS RIGHT. THIS IS
JUST BAD STRUCTURAL ENGINEERING
ON SOME FIFTY-YEAR-OLD
BUILDINGS.

ASIDE FROM THAT,
WHAT'RE YOU DOING
HERE? I THOUGHT YOU
HAD WORK TO DO AT
THE OFFICE.

*Last issue -- Todd



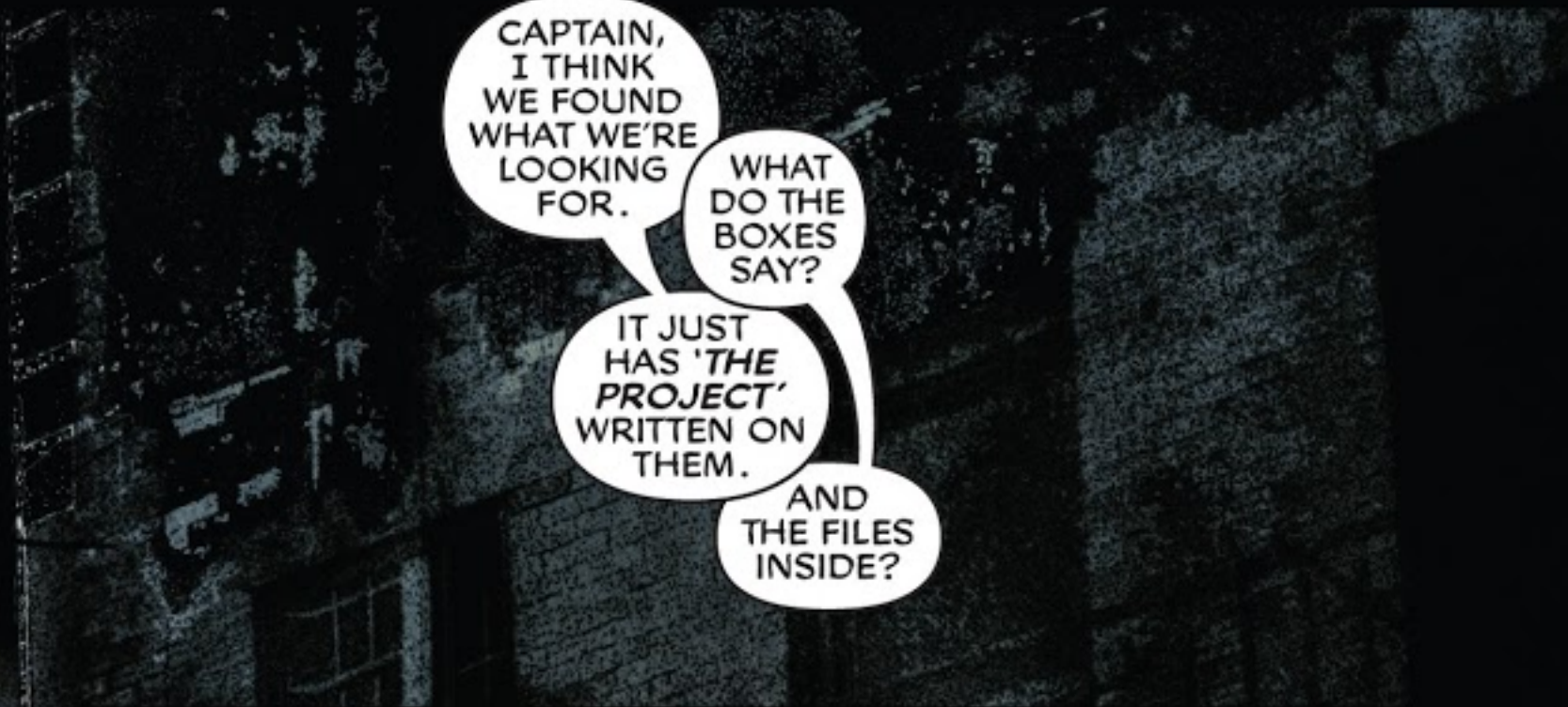
THAT'S WHAT I
CAME HERE TO TELL YOU.
I'M LEAVING. THEY'RE SENDING
ME BACK TO VIRGINIA.
FINALLY LETTING ME GO
BACK HOME.

HOW DO
YOU FEEL ABOUT
THAT?

TORN. I HATE
ABANDONING YOU
IN THE MIDDLE OF YOUR
CASE WITH DOWNING, BUT
I THINK I CAN DIG DEEPER
INTO A FEW LEADS BACK IN
LANGLEY, SINCE EVERY LEAD
FROM MY MURDER VICTIM
KEEPS CONNECTING TO
SOMEONE HERE IN
NEW YORK.

NOT TO
MENTION THE WEIRD
CRAP YOU CAME UP
WITH ON DOWNING'S
FINGERPRINTS.





CAPTAIN,
I THINK
WE FOUND
WHAT WE'RE
LOOKING
FOR.

WHAT
DO THE
BOXES
SAY?

IT JUST
HAS '**THE
PROJECT**'
WRITTEN ON
THEM.

AND
THE FILES
INSIDE?



THEY
SAY THE
SAME THING--
THOUGH HALF
OF THEM ARE
EMPTY. WHAT
DO WE DO
NOW?



BURN IT ALL.
JUST LIKE WE WERE
ORDERED TO DO.
DON'T LEAVE ANY-
THING BEHIND.





DROP
THE BOXES
AND STEP
BACK.

NOW!

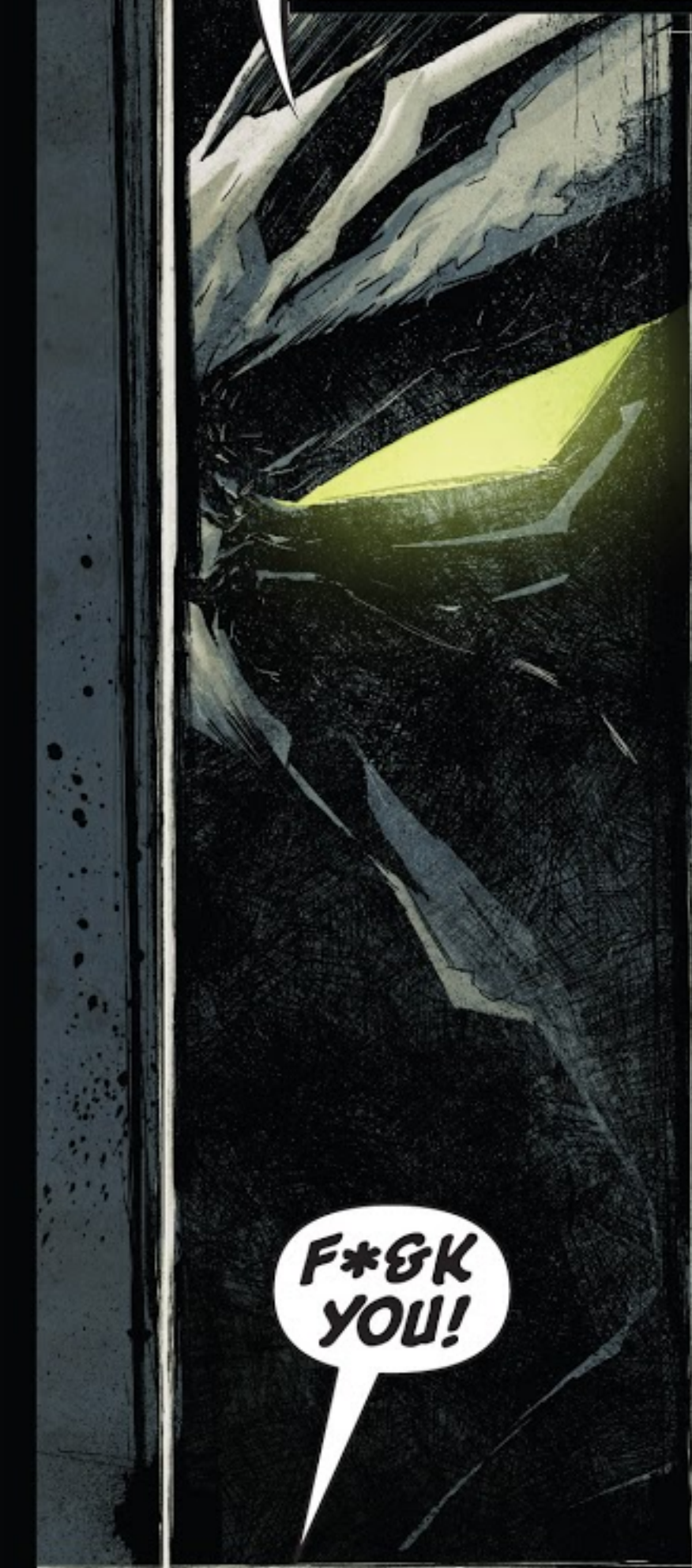
Jesus.



A large panel showing Batman hanging from a ceiling by thick metal chains. He is wearing his iconic suit with a red cape and a cowl with glowing yellow eyes. The background is dark and industrial.

I WANT
TO KNOW
WHY YOU WERE
BURNING
THOSE
FILES!

CLOWN AND BLUDD KEEP
SAYING IT'S SOMEHOW
CONNECTED TO ME. THAT
IT'LL FEED OFF MY EMOTIONS
AS IT TRIES TO PROTECT
ME. I CAN FEEL THE
CHAINS SNAPPING AND
THE CAPE WHIPPING ITSELF
INTO A FRENZY.

A vertical panel showing a close-up of a glowing yellow, jagged object, possibly a piece of debris or a weapon, set against a dark, textured background.

**F*CK
YOU!**

A panel showing three figures in a dark, industrial setting. One figure is in the foreground, looking towards the other two who are further back. The floor is covered in what appears to be blood or debris.

LIKE IT'S HUNGRY.

A large panel showing a close-up of a person's face, which is covered in numerous small, red, worm-like creatures. The person's eyes are wide open, and the overall tone is grotesque and horror-themed.

WANTING TO FEED.

I THOUGHT HE
MIGHT SAY THAT...
AND SO DID MY
COSTUME!

AND IT DOESN'T LIKE
HIS ANSWER ANY
MORE THAN I DO.

I CAN FEEL ITS
ANGER-- EVEN
WORSE THAN MINE.

A panel showing a figure running through a dark, industrial room. The figure is surrounded by a large, bright, fiery explosion or fire. Other figures are visible in the background, some appearing to be in a state of panic or flight.

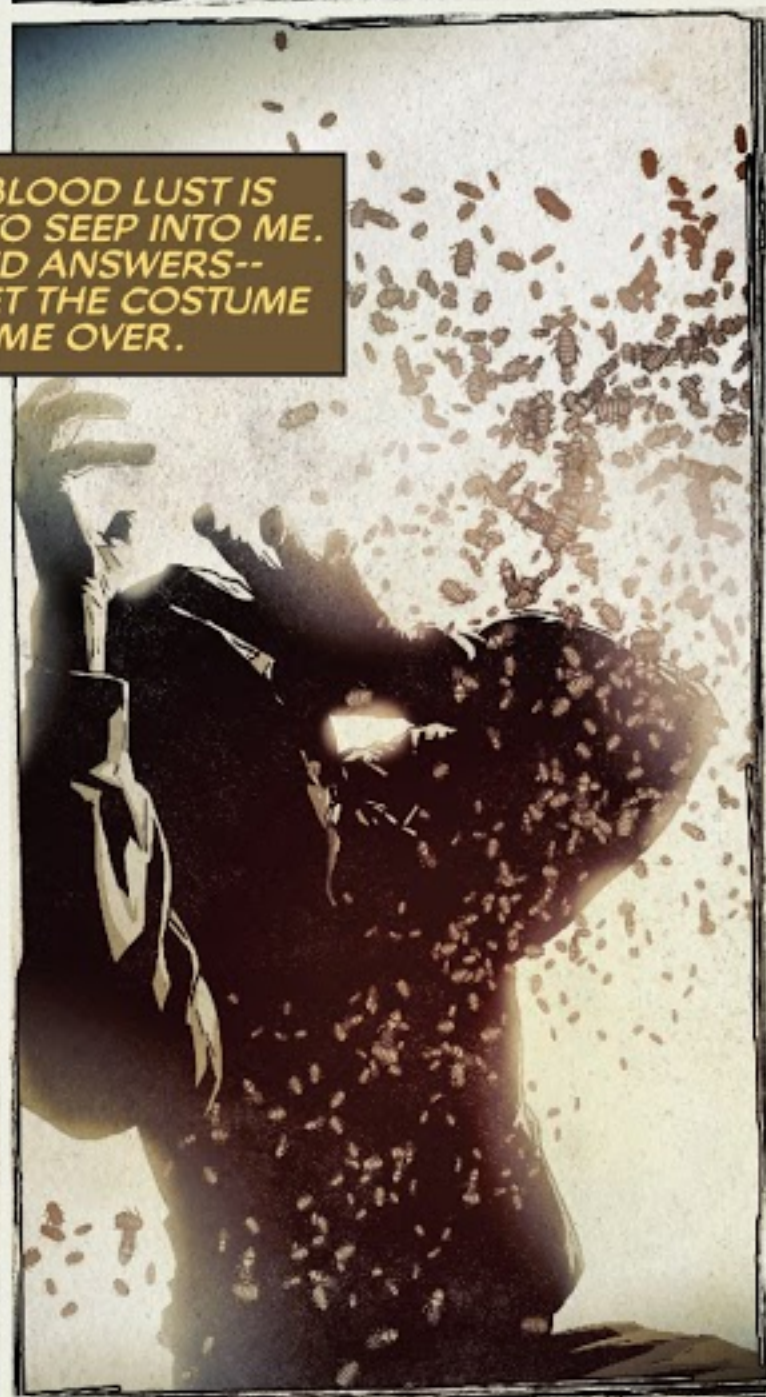
AND FOR A COSTUME
BORN IN HELL--
THAT HUNGER CAN BE
HORRIFYING!



IT TAKES EVERYTHING I HAVE TRYING TO HOLD IT BACK. OTHERWISE IT WOULD SIMPLY RIP THIS GUY APART.



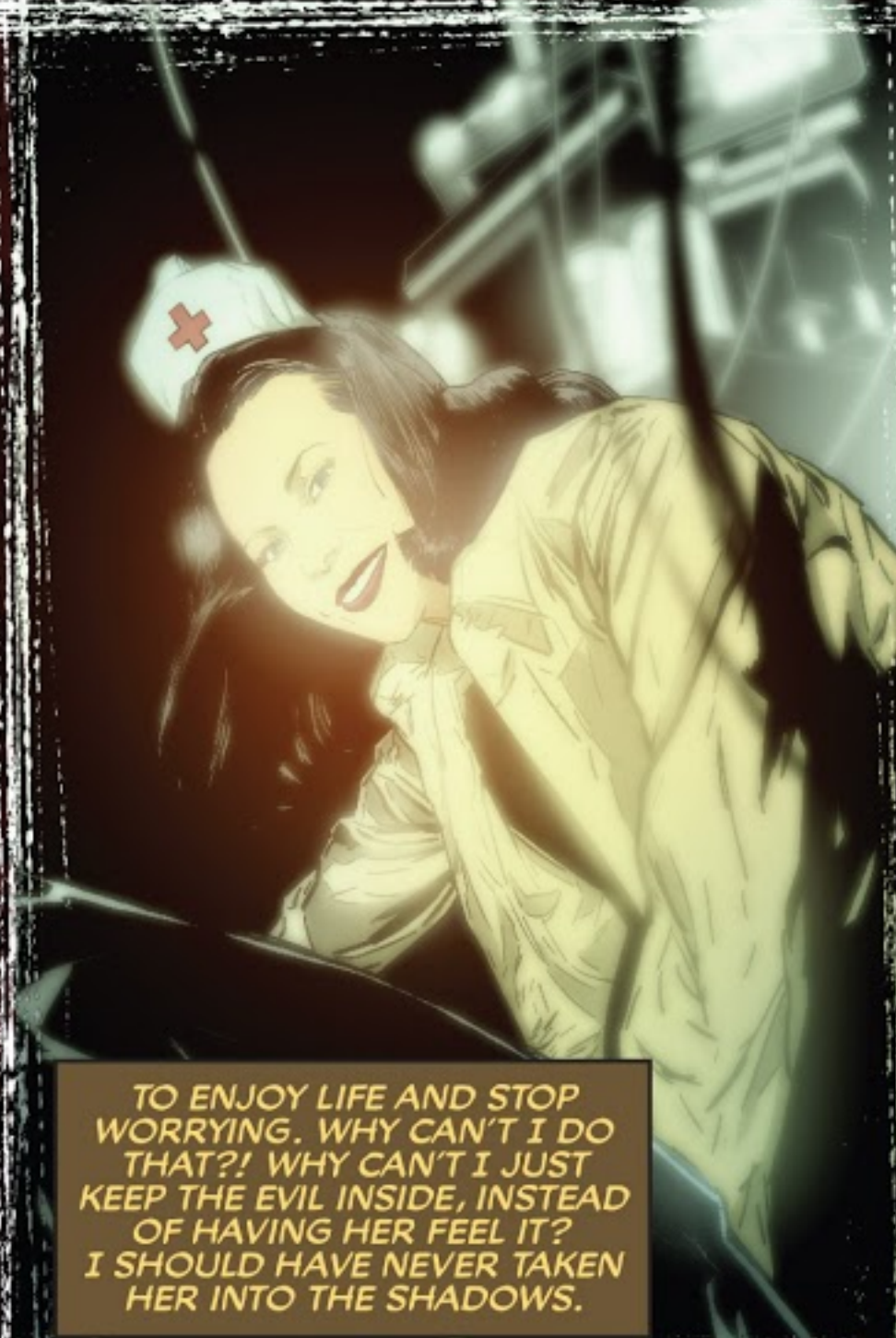
NOW ITS BLOOD LUST IS BEGINNING TO SEEP INTO ME. BUT I NEED ANSWERS-- BEFORE I LET THE COSTUME TAKE ME OVER.



BECAUSE I'M ABOUT TO FADE INTO DARKNESS... AGAIN.

A dark, atmospheric illustration of a creature, possibly a dragon or a large beast, with glowing orange eyes. The creature is shown in profile, facing left, with its head and upper body visible. The background is dark and textured, suggesting a cave or a night scene. The entire illustration is framed by a decorative, ornate border.

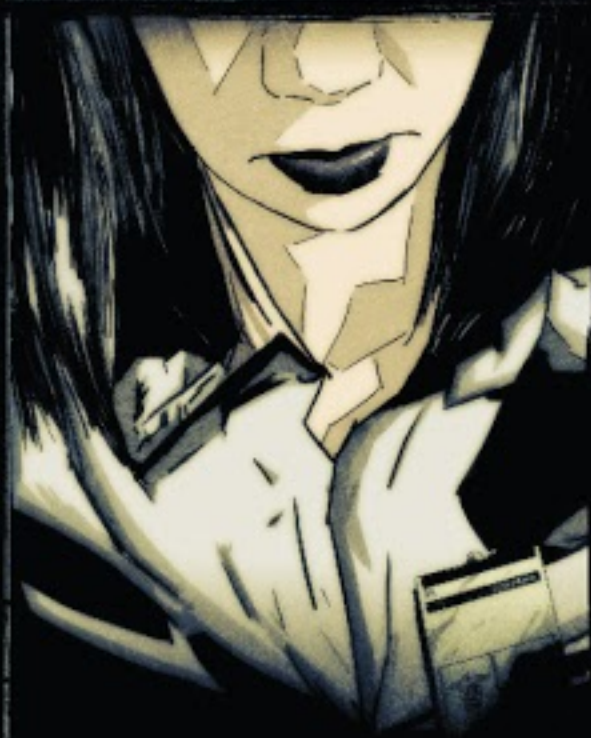
SHE'S THE ONLY ONE THAT'S THERE FOR ME. THAT I CAN COUNT ON. EVERYONE ELSE HAS AN AGENDA OF THEIR OWN. SO WHY DO I KEEP HURTING HER? ALL SHE WANTS IS FOR ME TO FIND MY PAST AND TO BE HAPPY.



TO ENJOY LIFE AND STOP
WORRYING. WHY CAN'T I DO
THAT?! WHY CAN'T I JUST
KEEP THE EVIL INSIDE, INSTEAD
OF HAVING HER FEEL IT?
I SHOULD HAVE NEVER TAKEN
HER INTO THE SHADOWS.



WHAT WAS I THINKING?



SOMETHING AS PURE
AS HER CAN'T TOUCH
THE DARKNESS.



IT'LL CHANGE HER.



IT'LL TAINT HER!



SHE CAN'T ENTER
MY NIGHTMARES!





WE HAVE NEW INFORMATION ON EVENTS THAT CAUSED FOUR SQUARE BLOCKS OF NEW YORK CITY TO COLLAPSE IN ON THEMSELVES EARLIER TODAY. INITIAL RUMORS OF A TERRORIST ATTACK ON THE CITY CAUSED PANIC AND SOME ISOLATED CASES OF RIOTING. POLICE WERE QUICK TO RESPOND, AND HAVE DETAINED A HANDFUL OF SUSPECTS.

IT WAS QUICKLY DETERMINED IN FACT THAT THE SITE-- A RUNDOWN NEIGHBORHOOD OF ABANDONED WAREHOUSES AND TENEMENTS KNOWN LOCALLY AS "RAT CITY"-- WAS FELLED BY THE COLLAPSE OF AN OLD, FORGOTTEN GAS LINE. ORIGINALLY, IT WAS THOUGHT THAT A MILD EARTHQUAKE MAY HAVE PLAYED A PART IN THE COLLAPSE, BUT INFORMATION NOW POINTS STRONGLY TO THE CRUMBLING PIPELINE.

WE'LL REPORT FURTHER INFORMATION AS IT BECOMES AVAILABLE.

ALSO IN NEW YORK CITY, JIM DOWNING, THE MYSTERIOUS 'FAITH HEALER,' HAS CALLED ANOTHER PRESS CONFERENCE. SPECULATION HAS IT THAT HE WILL OFFICIALLY CONFIRM THE NAME AND INTENT OF THE FOUNDATION HE'D PREVIOUSLY SAID HE WAS PUTTING TOGETHER.



MIRACLE WORKER JIM DOWNING IS SCHEDULED TO TAKE THE STAGE THIS AFTERNOON, IN YET ANOTHER PRESS CONFERENCE. WHETHER BY ACCIDENT OR DESIGN, HE'S KEPT TO HIMSELF FOR *JUST LONG ENOUGH* THAT THE BUZZ ABOUT HIS POSSIBLE DIVINITY HAS DIED DOWN.

SOMEWHAT.

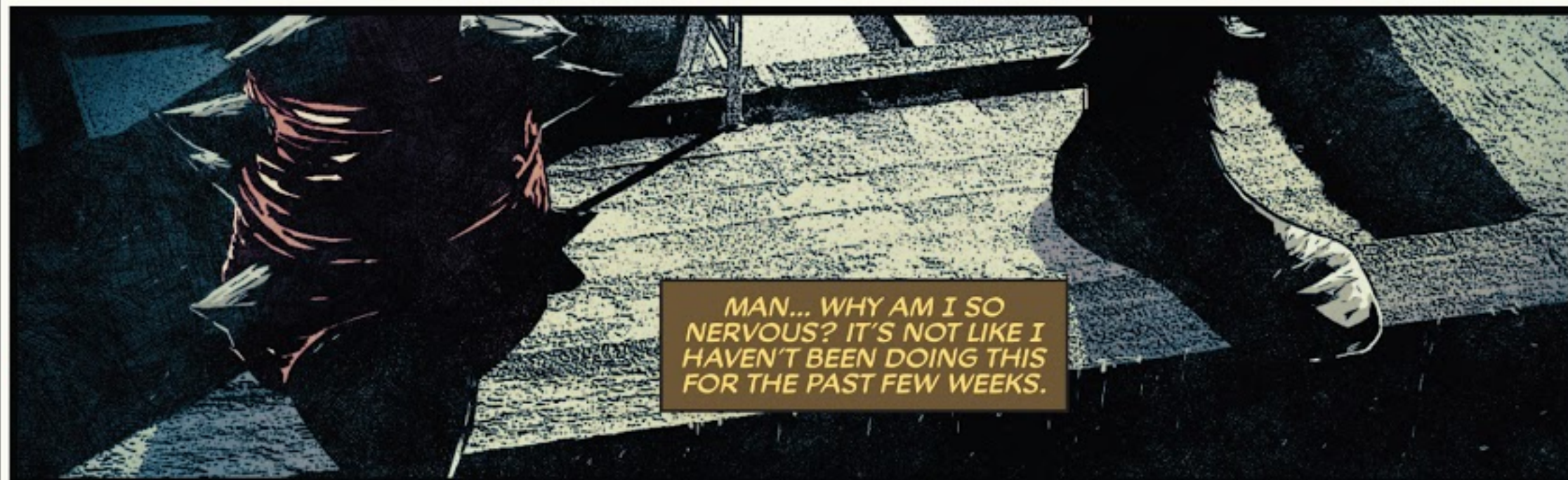
THERE'S NO DENYING HIS APPEAL TO THIS CITY'S IMAGINATION. AFTER HEALING A MEMBER OF THE PAPARAZZI, HE FOLLOWED THE AGE-OLD ADMONITION AND ALSO HEALED HIMSELF. THE MAN CONTINUES TO HOLD OUR ATTENTION, AND HE'S A BIG ENOUGH PLAYER THAT HE'S BEING ALLOWED TO SET THE PACE. THE NETWORK ATTENTION HE'S BEEN GRANTED FOR THIS AFTERNOON'S FESTIVITIES TELLS US THAT HE'S NOT GOING TO DRIFT AWAY.

FOLLOWING HIS ANNOUNCEMENT LAST WEEK, AN ALMOST CAMPAIGN-STYLE HINT AT HIS BROAD INTENTIONS TO FORM A CHARITABLE FOUNDATION, IT'S REASONABLE TO SPECULATE THAT DOWNING NOW INTENDS TO LAY OUT SOME SPECIFICS. HOW SPECIFIC CAN HE BE, THOUGH? HE'S IMPLYING THAT HE INTENDS TO TRADE IN MIRACLES-- AND MIRACLES ARE AWFULLY HARD TO PIN DOWN.



HERE IT COMES! YET ANOTHER PRESS CONFERENCE FOR THIS SELF-INVOLVED FREELOADER. THERE ARE **BIGGER** THINGS TO FOCUS ON THAN ANOTHER IN THE LONG LINE OF SEEMINGLY ENDLESS AND INCREASINGLY TIRESOME PRESS CONFERENCES THAT JIM DOWNING SEEMS TO LOVE TO THROW FOR HIMSELF. **NO IDENTITY! NO BACKGROUND!** HOW ARE WE SUPPOSED TO PUT OUR TRUST IN THIS GUY?! HOW MANY TIMES WILL WE BE FORCED TO LISTEN TO PEOPLE TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE SYSTEM? AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, IT'S JUST ONE MORE NON-PROFIT LOOKING FOR TAX EXEMPTION TO ESSENTIALLY STEAL FROM OUR GOVERNMENT.

AS IF WE DIDN'T HAVE ENOUGH GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE BEING HANDED OUT AFTER THE LATEST BUILDING COLLAPSES IN THE CITY? ONE MORE **PRESS CONFERENCE** IS JUST WHAT THIS TOWN NEEDS!



MAN... WHY AM I SO NERVOUS? IT'S NOT LIKE I HAVEN'T BEEN DOING THIS FOR THE PAST FEW WEEKS.



TV CAMERAS. PRESS CONFERENCES. I THINK I'M ACTUALLY GETTING PRETTY GOOD WITH BOTH OF THEM.

THEN WHY WON'T THE BUTTERFLIES GO AWAY IN MY STOMACH? I'M ACTING LIKE A SCHOOL KID.

OR MAYBE I KNOW THAT IF THIS PLAN DOESN'T WORK-- I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO PROTECT SARA OR MARC. THEY'LL ALWAYS BE IN THE LINE OF FIRE BECAUSE OF ME.

SO THEIR ONLY CHANCE OF NOT BECOMING TARGETS-- OR NOT GETTING HURT-- IS IF I HIDE EVERYTHING AWAY FROM THEM.

IT'S THE ONLY WAY.



BUT SARA'S GOING
TO BE A HUGE TASK
SINCE SHE'S ALREADY
SEEN WHAT I CAN DO.
I SAW THE FEAR ON
HER FACE WHEN SHE
CAME OUT OF THE
SHADOWS WITH ME.*

WHAT THE HELL WAS GOING
THROUGH MY BRAIN? OF COURSE
SHE'D BE TRAUMATIZED-- WHO
WOULDN'T BE? WHAT WAS I
THINKING?

*See Issue #204-- Todd



SO NOW
I NEED TO
MAKE THIS
RIGHT.



BECAUSE IF I'VE BETRAYED
BOTH HEAVEN AND HELL--
LIKE MALEBOLGIA SAID...



...I CAN ONLY IMAGINE WHAT THEY'RE CAPABLE OF SENDING MY WAY.

FIRST OFF, I'D LIKE TO THANK ALL OF YOU FOR COMING OUT AGAIN TODAY. AS I MENTIONED IN MY FIRST PRESS CONFERENCE-- I WAS IN THE PROCESS OF STARTING A CHARITABLE FOUNDATION THAT WOULD HELP RAISE AWARENESS OF THOSE SUFFERING FROM DEBILITATING DISEASES AND OTHER HEALTH ISSUES.

I ALSO SAID THAT I'D UNDERGO A BATTERY OF TESTING TO CONCLUDE WHETHER I COULD USE MY 'HEALING' POWERS ON ANY OF THE UNFORTUNATE INDIVIDUALS. PRELIMINARY TESTS ARE UNDERWAY, AND MORE EXTENSIVE VERSIONS OF EACH OF THOSE TESTS WILL BE CONDUCTED LATER THIS WEEK.

BUT THAT ISN'T WHY I'M HERE TODAY. INSTEAD, IT IS WITH GREAT PRIDE THAT I OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCE THE OPENING OF THE 'RESTORE, RESTRUCTURE AND RESURRECT FOUNDATION'.



klik

klik

klik

klik

klik

klik

klik

klik

klik

cli

AND BEFORE ANY OF YOU ASK-- THE ANSWER IS "NO." THE NAME OF THE FOUNDATION ISN'T BASED ON ANY POWERS I MAY OR MAY NOT HAVE.

IT, INSTEAD, IMPLIES OUR GOAL IN HELPING OUT NOT ONLY PEOPLE, BUT ALSO THEIR COMMUNITIES AND NEIGHBORHOODS.



AS MOST OF YOU PROBABLY SAW THE OTHER DAY, I WAS SHOT BY AN ASSAILANT AT A TV STATION. AND AS MOST OF YOU ALSO SAW-- I SOMEHOW SURVIVED THE ORDEAL. BUT FOR A BRIEF MOMENT, AS I LAY THERE ON THE GROUND, A THOUGHT CROSSED MY MIND-- "WHAT DO I CARE ABOUT?"

WHAT IS IT THAT I'M MOST AFRAID OF LOSING IF I DIE RIGHT HERE?

MY ANSWER WAS SIMPLE: THE PEOPLE AROUND ME. BUT I ALSO THOUGHT THAT IT WAS THE ENVIRONMENT THOSE PEOPLE LIVED IN THAT MADE THEM SO SPECIAL AND STRONG.

WITHOUT A SAFE AND CONSTRUCTIVE ENVIRONMENT, NONE OF THEM MIGHT HAVE TURNED INTO THE PEOPLE THEY ARE TODAY. SO, THE FIRST ACT OF MY NEW FOUNDATION IS TO PURCHASE THE RECENTLY DESTROYED BLOCK OF ABANDONED BUILDINGS AND ALLEYWAYS... THE AREA SOMETIMES CALLED 'RAT CITY'-- AND REBUILD IT INTO A VIBRANT, PROSPEROUS COMMUNITY.

THIS IS THE FIRST STEP IN OUR FOUNDATION IMPLEMENTING THE GOAL TO 'RESTORE, RESTRUCTURE AND RESURRECT'. NOW, IF ANYONE HAS QUESTIONS, I'D BE MORE THAN HAPPY TO ANSWER THEM.

INTERESTING MOVE, DOWNING. BUT WAIT UNTIL YOU HEAR ABOUT MY RESURRECTION.

NEXT: "THE PROJECT"

SPAWN

IS

AMAZING

APPROVED
BY THE
IMAGE
COMICS
AUTHORITY

DIGITAL
EDITION

221
JUL.

THOUGH
THE WORLD
MAY CLAMOR
FOR THE
HEALING
POWER
OF JIM
DOWNING...

...IT WILL
SOON
COVER
AT THE
FEARSOME
IMAGE OF
SPAWN!



McFARLANE
PARODY
+fco



IT'S TOO LATE.

THAT'S THE THING YOU WILL
NEVER UNDERSTAND. ONCE
YOU'VE BEEN CHOSEN... IT'S
TOO LATE TO TURN BACK.

TOO LATE TO EVER REGAIN THE
HUMANITY YOU ONCE HAD.

BECAUSE WHEN GOD CREATED
MAN HE GAVE HIM THE CAPACITY
OF SIN AND WITH THAT CAME AN
OPENING FOR US TO CORRUPT
HIS DESIGN FLAW.

GOD MADE THE
FATAL MISTAKE OF
MAKING HIS NEW
CREATIONS
'IMPERFECT.'



SO THEY ALL BECAME
ADDICTED TO IT.

SOON THEY DEVELOPED
A DESIRE FOR THEIR
SINS. AND AS TIME WENT
BY, THOSE DESIRES
TURNED TO A DARK
CRAVING. A LUST.

ONE THAT COULDN'T
BE SATIATED.



THAT'S WHEN
WE CAME--
WHEN WE
POURED
OVER THEM.



DROWNING THEM IN
THEIR OWN DESIRES.



UNTIL EACH AND EVERY ONE
OF THEM TIGHTLY CLUNG TO
THE **ONE THING** GOD MEANT
TO ELIMINATE. THE COLD, DARK
EMBRACE OF... **EVIL!**



AND FOR YOU, JIM
DOWNING, THAT'S
WHERE I COME IN.
THAT PAIN YOU FEEL
INSIDE-- IS ME--
YOUR COSTUME.

I'M THE ADDICTION
COURSING THROUGH
YOUR VEINS.

I'M YOUR EVIL.

AND AS MUCH AS YOU
MIGHT TRY TO BREAK THAT
LINK, THE THING THAT
WILL ALWAYS BE TRUE
FOR YOU HUMANS
IS THAT, WHEN YOU'RE
BEING CONSUMED BY
YOUR ADDICTION...

...YOU'RE THE
LAST ONE TO
KNOW IT!



AS AN ADDICT, YOU WILL NEVER ADMIT THAT THERE'S EVEN A PROBLEM-- OR THAT YOU ARE HARMING YOURSELF AND OTHERS. INSTEAD, YOU'LL DENY THE VERY EXISTENCE OF THAT WHICH IS DESTROYING YOU.

CLINGING FOOLISHLY TO THE 'LINK' YOU MIGHT HOLD WITH HEAVEN. TRYING TO RATIONALIZE THAT WHATEVER IS HAPPENING TO YOU WON'T TOUCH YOUR SOUL.



BUT THAT'S THE MOMENT IT HAPPENS.



THAT'S WHEN I DEVOUR YOU AND YOUR FREE WILL.

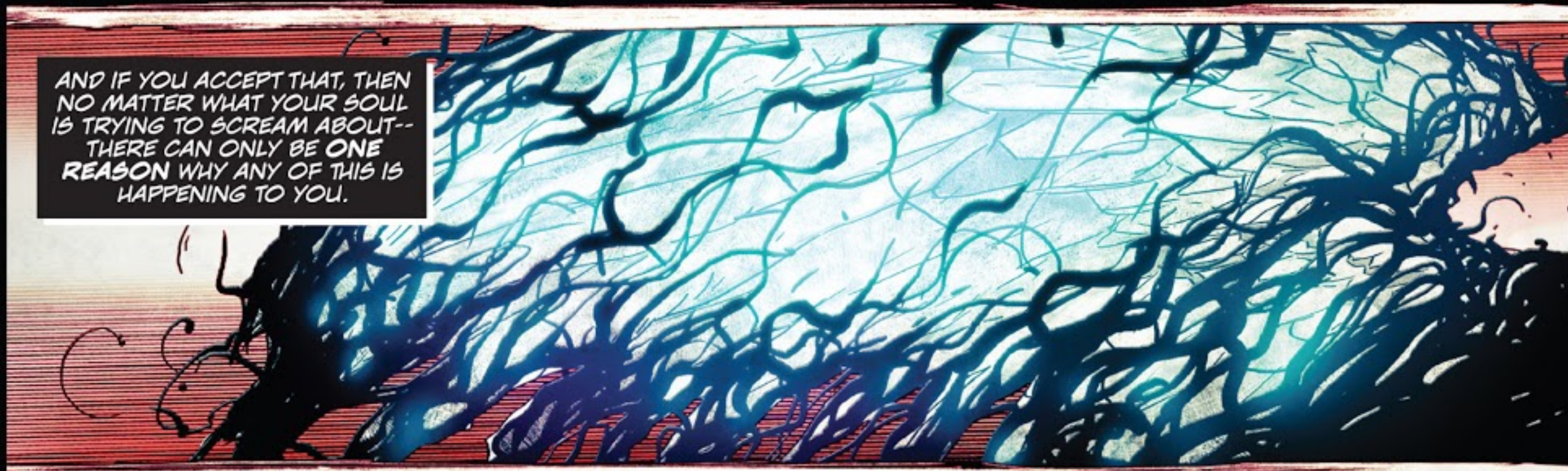


AND THAT'S WHEN WE COMPLETE YOUR TRANSFORMATION.



WHEN IT ALL BECOMES
PERMANENT!

BECAUSE IF YOU DON'T
BELIEVE I'M TAKING OVER YOUR
BODY-- OR THAT I EVEN EXIST--
THEN EVERYTHING YOU DO,
EVERY ACTION YOU TAKE
MUST BE YOUR OWN.



AND IF YOU ACCEPT THAT, THEN
NO MATTER WHAT YOUR SOUL
IS TRYING TO SCREAM ABOUT--
THERE CAN ONLY BE ONE
REASON WHY ANY OF THIS IS
HAPPENING TO YOU.



IT'S BECAUSE YOU LIKE
THE **POWER** I
GIVE YOU!



2 Days Ago.

BECAUSE
LEADING TWO
LIVES IS
GRINDING ME
DOWN.

HAVE D.N.A.
AND BLOOD
SAMPLES BEEN
SENT OUT?

YEAH.
LABS SAID
THEY'D RUSH THE
RESULTS.

WHAT
ABOUT THE
BIOPSY AND
MOLECULAR
TESTS?

I CAN'T
KEEP UP
THIS PACE.

THOSE
ARE
COMING,
TOO.

THAT'S THE
LAST CONTRACT
YOU NEED TO SIGN,
MR. DOWNING. I'LL
MAKE SURE EVERYONE
RECEIVES A PROPER
COPY AND WE'LL
FILE THEM WITH
THE GOVERNMENT
FIRST THING
TOMORROW.

YOUR
FOUNDATION
IS OFFICIALLY UP
AND RUNNING.
ALSO, THE TITLES
TO THE REAL
ESTATE YOU JUST
PURCHASED WILL
BE IN YOUR
HANDS IN THE
MORNING.

Yesterday.



OF COURSE
WE'D BE INTERESTED
IN MAKING A CONTRIBUTION
TO YOUR FOUNDATION, JIM.
EVERYONE HERE AT THE BANK
HAS BEEN FOLLOWING YOU
ON T.V. AND IN THE PAPERS
WITH KEEN INTEREST.
MYSELF INCLUDED.



'THE
PROJECT'.
YOU'RE GOING
TO TELL ME
EVERYTHING
YOU KNOW
ABOUT IT.



JUST KEEP
WALKING, JIM... AND
SEE IF YOU CAN'T SMILE
A LITTLE. PEOPLE LOVE
TO READ ABOUT HAPPY
CELEBRITIES.

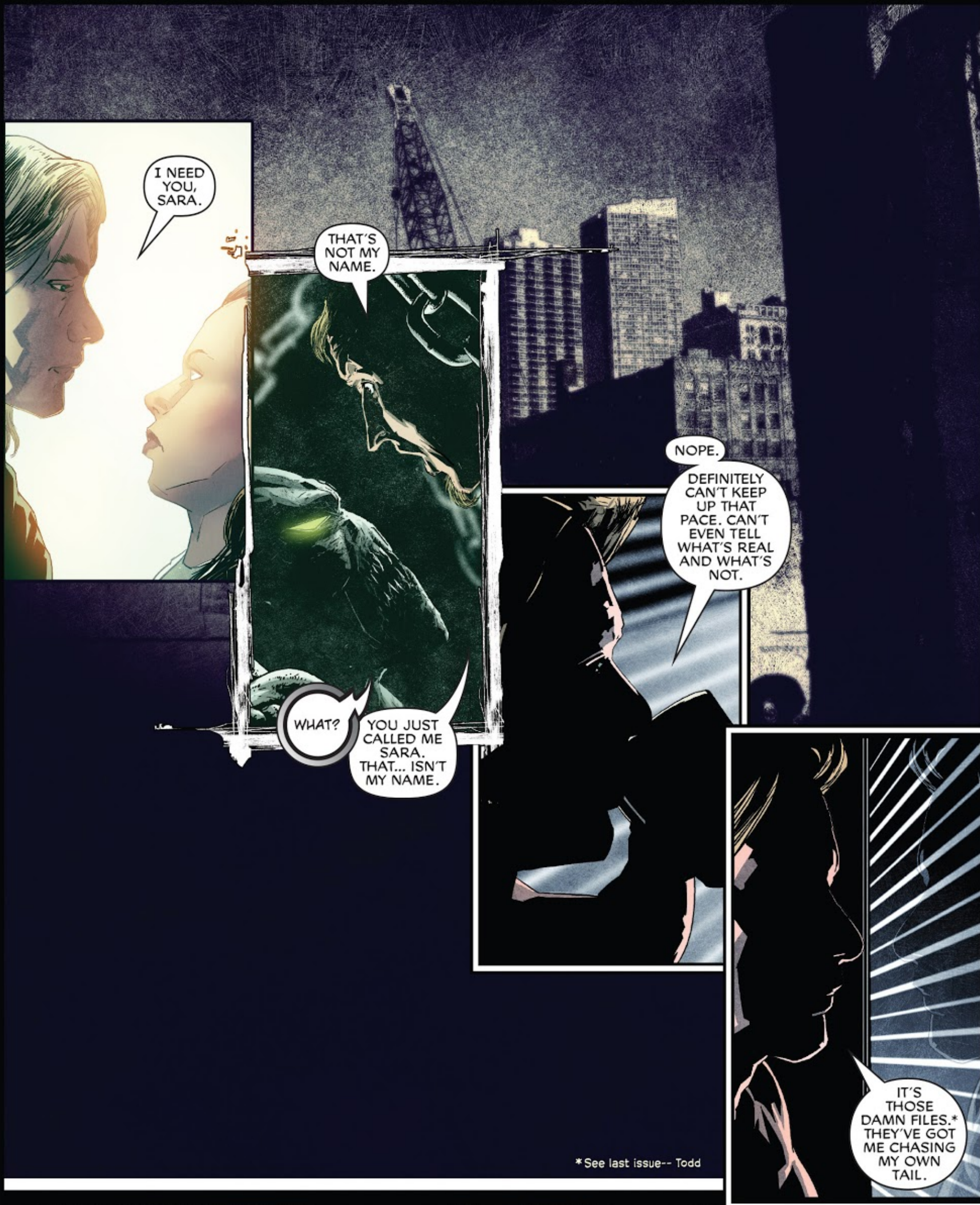
YOU'RE
RIGHT. I'M
JUST... I STILL
NEED SOME
TIME TO GET
USE TO ALL
THIS.



GODDAMMIT!
WE DON'T KNOW
NOTHING ABOUT
'THE PROJECT'!

choke!

THEY
WOULDN'T
TELL US ANY-
THING.



I NEED YOU, SARA.

THAT'S NOT MY NAME.

NOPE.

DEFINITELY CAN'T KEEP UP THAT PACE. CAN'T EVEN TELL WHAT'S REAL AND WHAT'S NOT.

WHAT?

YOU JUST CALLED ME SARA. THAT... ISN'T MY NAME.

IT'S THOSE DAMN FILES.* THEY'VE GOT ME CHASING MY OWN TAIL.

*See last issue-- Todd

BUT I KNOW THEY HAVE TO HOLD SOME ANSWERS.

WHO AM I??



I JUST HAVE TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO UNLOCK THEM.

PROJECT

PROJECT

HOW TO
CONNECT
ALL THESE
EVENTS AND
PEOPLE.



BECAUSE
SOMEHOW
IT ALL
LEADS BACK
TO ME.



**KNOCK
KNOCK**





WHAT DO YOU MEAN WHAT IS IT?! IT'S A CALENDAR! AND THAT'S JUST THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG. YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN ALL THE OTHER CRAP THEY WERE SELLING.

WHERE'D YOU GET THIS?

LOOK, I UNDERSTAND YOU DON'T WANT TO RUN EVERYTHING BY ME-- THAT'S FINE-- BUT THE LICENSING STUFF SHOULD...



I HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH THIS!

NOW SHOW ME WHERE YOU GOT THIS!



Shit.

YEP. THAT'S WHAT I SAID.



HATS. POSTERS. T-SHIRTS. YOU NAME IT... THEY'VE GOT IT!



I'M SORRY, MR. DOWNING... BUT HE'S BUSY NOW. WOULD YOU LIKE TO SCHEDULE FOR TOMORROW?



NO!...

I'M HERE. I'LL SEE HIM NOW!

BEEZP



I'M SORRY, MR. RAMUS. SHOULD I CALL SECURITY?

NO. NO. THAT'S FINE.

I WAS ACTUALLY EXPECTING MR. DOWNING TO MAKE AN APPEARANCE SOME TIME TODAY. PLEASE CANCEL MY APPOINTMENTS FOR THE NEXT HOUR.



SO, JIM-- WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?

I NEED YOU AND YOUR STAFF OF LAWYERS TO SEND OUT A 'CEASE AND DESIST' TO THIS STORE'S OWNER. THEY'RE MAKING A BUNCH OF BOOTLEG, UNAUTHORIZED STUFF WITH MY IMAGE ON IT.

HOW MUCH PRODUCT WAS THERE?



I DON'T KNOW-- TEN, MAYBE FIFTEEN ITEMS. EVERYTHING FROM CUPS TO BUMPER STICKERS.



THAT'S GOOD.

GOOD?! WHAT'RE YOU TALKING ABOUT? WE NEED TO MAKE THEM STOP.

NOW WHY WOULD I WANT TO DO THAT...



WHEN I'M THE ONE MANUFACTURING IT ALL?



OH, COME NOW-- DON'T LOOK SO STUNNED. SURELY YOU DIDN'T EXPECT ME TO JUST FUND YOUR FOUNDATION'S ENDEAVORS WITHOUT HAVING SOME CONTROL OVER YOU... OR YOUR IMAGE.

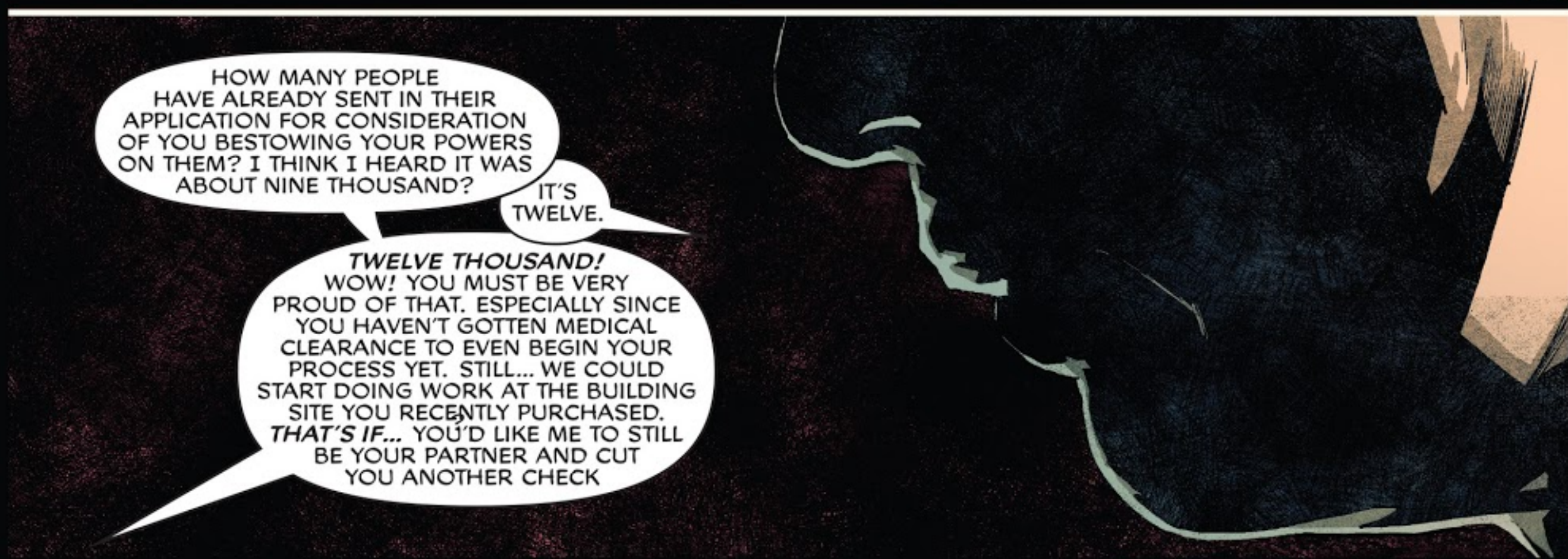
IT WAS ALL RIGHT THERE IN THE CONTRACT-- IF YOU'D JUST TAKEN TIME TO READ IT. INSTEAD YOU WANTED TO BLACK-MAIL ME INTO FUNDING YOUR CHARITY. SO... TURNABOUT IS FAIR PLAY. YOU GET YOUR POUND OF FLESH BY EXTRACTING CASH.

WHILE I GET MINE BY HAVING ALL LEGAL RIGHTS TO YOUR PERSONA. AND THE PRODUCTION OF EVERYTHING YOU SAW IN THAT STORE-- OF WHICH I OWN-- IS JUST GETTING RAMPED UP.



I'LL SUE YOU!

YOU CAN TRY. THOUGH I DOUBT YOU'D WIN. PLUS, IT WOULDN'T LOOK SO GOOD TO THE PUBLIC IF YOU WERE TO SUE THE PERSON WHO IS SO WILLING TO HELP YOU ASSIST THOSE LESS FORTUNATE THAN OURSELVES.



HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE ALREADY SENT IN THEIR APPLICATION FOR CONSIDERATION OF YOU BESTOWING YOUR POWERS ON THEM? I THINK I HEARD IT WAS ABOUT NINE THOUSAND?

IT'S TWELVE.

TWELVE THOUSAND! WOW! YOU MUST BE VERY PROUD OF THAT. ESPECIALLY SINCE YOU HAVEN'T GOTTEN MEDICAL CLEARANCE TO EVEN BEGIN YOUR PROCESS YET. STILL... WE COULD START DOING WORK AT THE BUILDING SITE YOU RECENTLY PURCHASED. **THAT'S IF...** YOU'D LIKE ME TO STILL BE YOUR PARTNER AND CUT YOU ANOTHER CHECK



YOU DON'T NEED TO ANSWER ME NOW. THINK ABOUT IT AND GET BACK TO ME.

Oh... ONE LAST THING-- I HEARD YOU MADE AN IMPROMPTU TRIP TO ARGENTINA AND GOT YOUR HANDS ON SOME FILES. I'M GLAD YOU'VE BEEN KEEPING YOURSELF BUSY. IT'S GOOD FOR THE SOUL.

Rat City. Hours Later.





SORRY.
DIDN'T
MEAN TO
STARTLE
YOU.



WHO
THE HELL
ARE
YOU?!



EASY, BUD!
I'M NOT LOOKING
FOR TROUBLE. I
JUST... I'VE COME A
LONG WAY TO SEE YOU.*
IF YOU COULD GIVE ME
A COUPLE MINUTES,
I'LL EXPLAIN WHY
I'M HERE.

I ALREADY
KNOW
WHY YOU'RE
HERE!

*Check out the last
dozen issues -- Todd



AND THE ANSWER IS NO!

I'M NOT HEALING YOU OR ANY OF YOUR LOVED ONES TODAY.



unh?

BUD, YOU'VE GOT IT WRONG. I THINK I CAN HELP YOU... ACTUALLY I THINK WE CAN HELP EACH OTHER.



I JUST LEFT SOMEONE THAT'S SUPPOSEDLY HELPING ME. INSTEAD HE'S SCREWING ME! JUST LIKE EVERYONE ELSE THAT SAYS THEY'RE TRYING TO HELP! SO GET OUT OF HERE! I'M NOT IN THE MOOD FOR YOUR BULLSHIT!



NO, I DON'T!!

YOU DON'T REMEMBER ME, DO YOU?

THEN MAYBE THIS WILL HELP...

OR HAVE YOU
BLOCKED OUT HOW YOU AND
'THE PROJECT' TURNED ME INTO...

TREMOR!

NEXT: **THE CURE?**



image



THE AVENGING ANTI-HERO!

SPAWN®

DIGITAL
EDITION

222
AUG

APPROVED
BY THE
IMAGE
COMICS



TREMOR
IS BACK!



McFARIANE
parody of
Todd

+fco



LIKE I SAID--
I REALLY CAN'T
CONTROL WHAT
I'M DOING ALL
THE TIME.

YOU SURE
YOU STILL
WANT TO DO
THIS?



NO.

BUT I
DON'T HAVE ANY
CHOICE. BECAUSE IF
I HAVE TO LIVE LIKE
THIS MUCH LONGER--
I'D RATHER BE
DEAD.

SO STOP
PRETENDING
YOU *GIVE A
SHIT* ABOUT
ME AND GET
THIS OVER
WITH.



FINE.



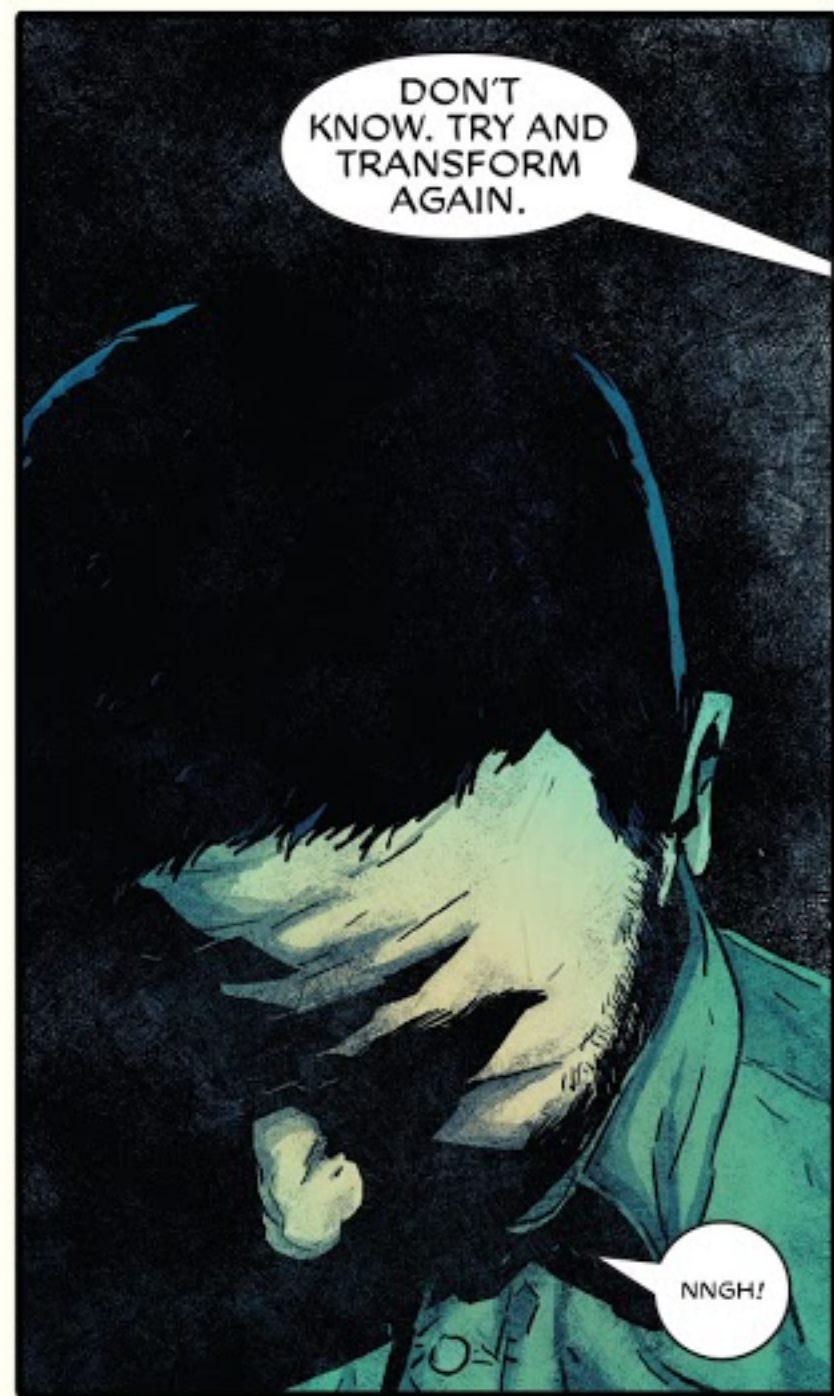
THEN I'D
ADVISE YOU TO
GET PREPARED--
BECAUSE THIS
MIGHT *HURT* A
LITTLE.





THAT'S
IT. WE'RE
DONE.

Did... do
you think
it worked?



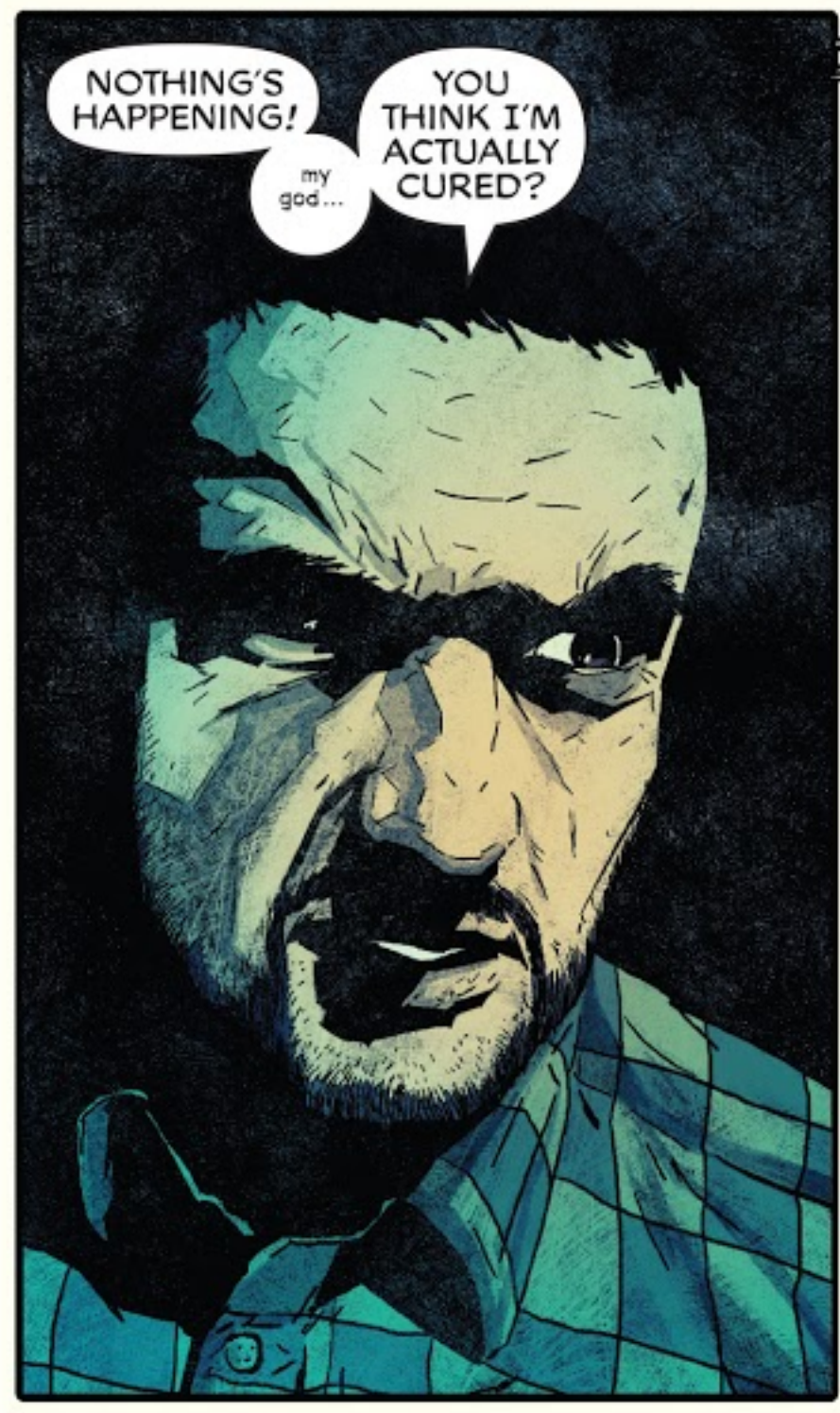
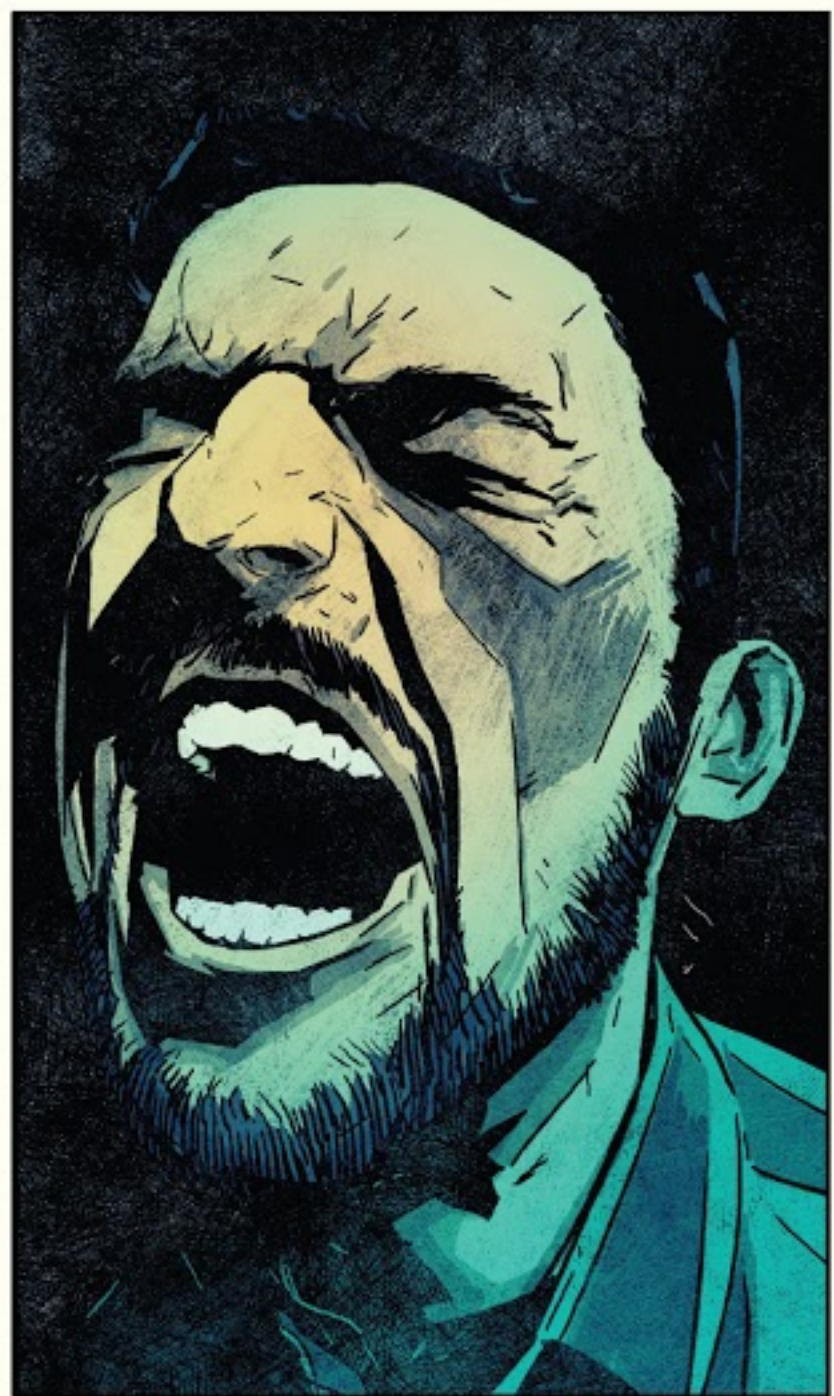
DON'T
KNOW. TRY AND
TRANSFORM
AGAIN.

NNGH!



I DON'T
FEEL ANY-
THING.

THEN TRY
HARDER!



NOTHING'S
HAPPENING!

my
god...

YOU
THINK I'M
ACTUALLY
CURED?

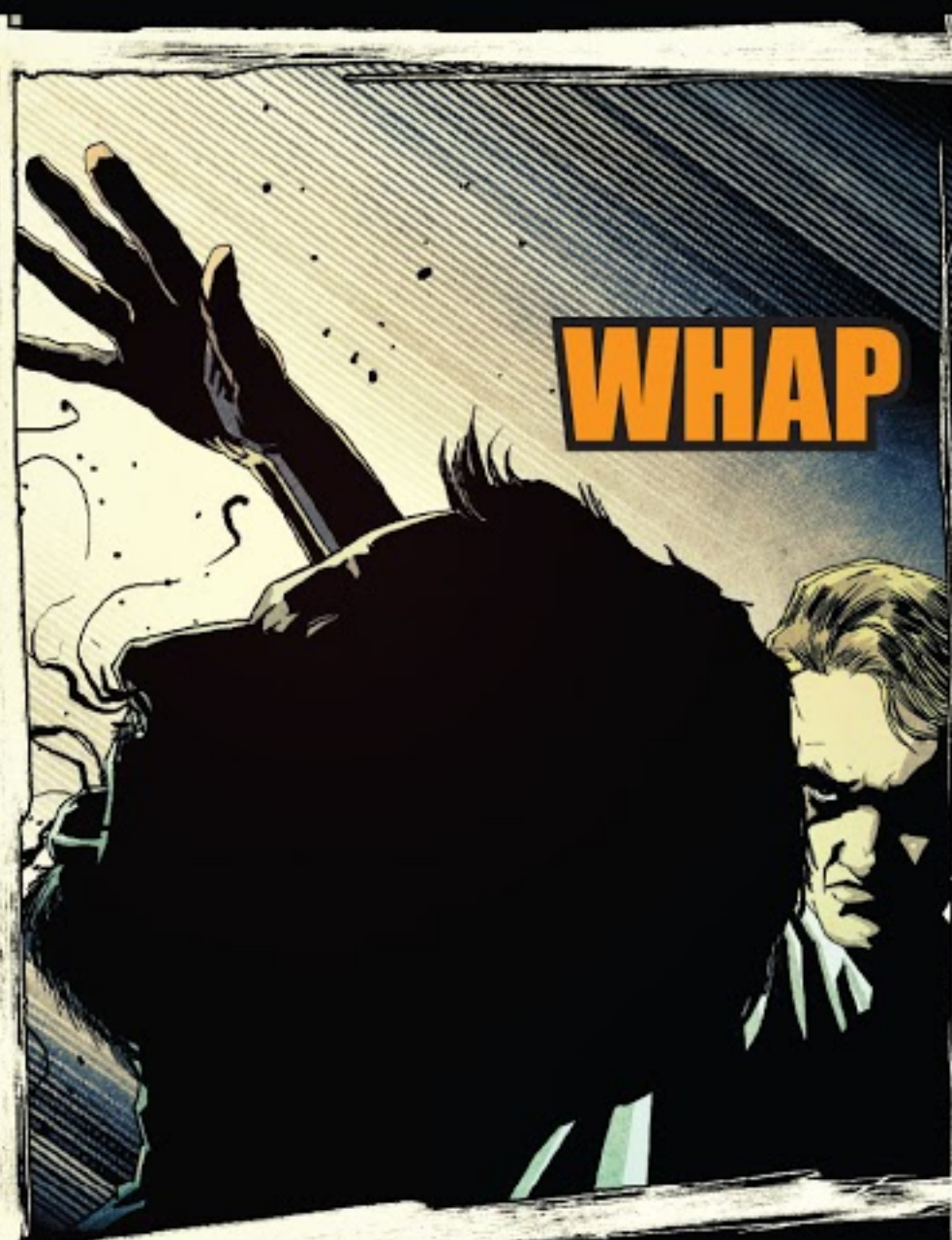


THWAK



CHRIST!
WHAT THE
HELL IS
WRONG
WITH
YOU?!

GET
UP.



WHAP



KRAK



FUMP







SO THAT'S IT?

I'LL NEVER TRANSFORM AGAIN?

I DON'T KNOW THAT. BUT IT LOOKS LIKE 'TREMOR' IS GONE-- AT LEAST FOR NOW.

I GUESS I OWE YOU MY GRATITUDE.

I'M NOT CONCERNED ABOUT THAT.

AS I TOLD YOU, THE ONLY REASON I DID THIS IS BECAUSE YOU MADE ME REMEMBER *SOMETHING*. AND IT WASN'T YOU-- IT WAS THE BEAST! I DON'T KNOW YOU... BUT WHEN YOU TURNED INTO TREMOR IT TRIGGERED SOMETHING.

YOU AND TREMOR ARE A PIECE OF MY PAST-- A PIECE OF THIS CONVOLUTED PUZZLE IN MY BRAIN. AND NOW THAT I'VE TAKEN AWAY THE THREAT OF YOU TURNING ON ME-- IT'S TIME YOU HELD UP YOUR END OF THE BARGAIN.

BUT FIRST, THERE'S SOMETHING I WANT YOU TO SEE.

Moments Later.



THIS IS INCREDIBLE. HOW'D YOU GET ALL THIS?

DOESN'T MATTER. I JUST DID.

THEN MY INSTINCTS WERE RIGHT.

ABOUT WHAT?

ABOUT US BOTH BEING PATIENTS AT THE SAME FACILITY. SO, WHEN DID THEY GET THEIR HOOKS INTO YOU? I WAS PATIENT 33.

I THINK I'M 47.



WHOA! I DIDN'T THINK THEY WENT THAT HIGH. THAT MEANS THOSE BASTARDS EXPERIMENTED ON *ANOTHER FOURTEEN* AFTER ME? I DIDN'T THINK THE PROJECT LASTED *THAT* LONG BEFORE IT WENT BELLY UP.

DO YOU KNOW IF THERE WERE ANY MORE AFTER YOU?

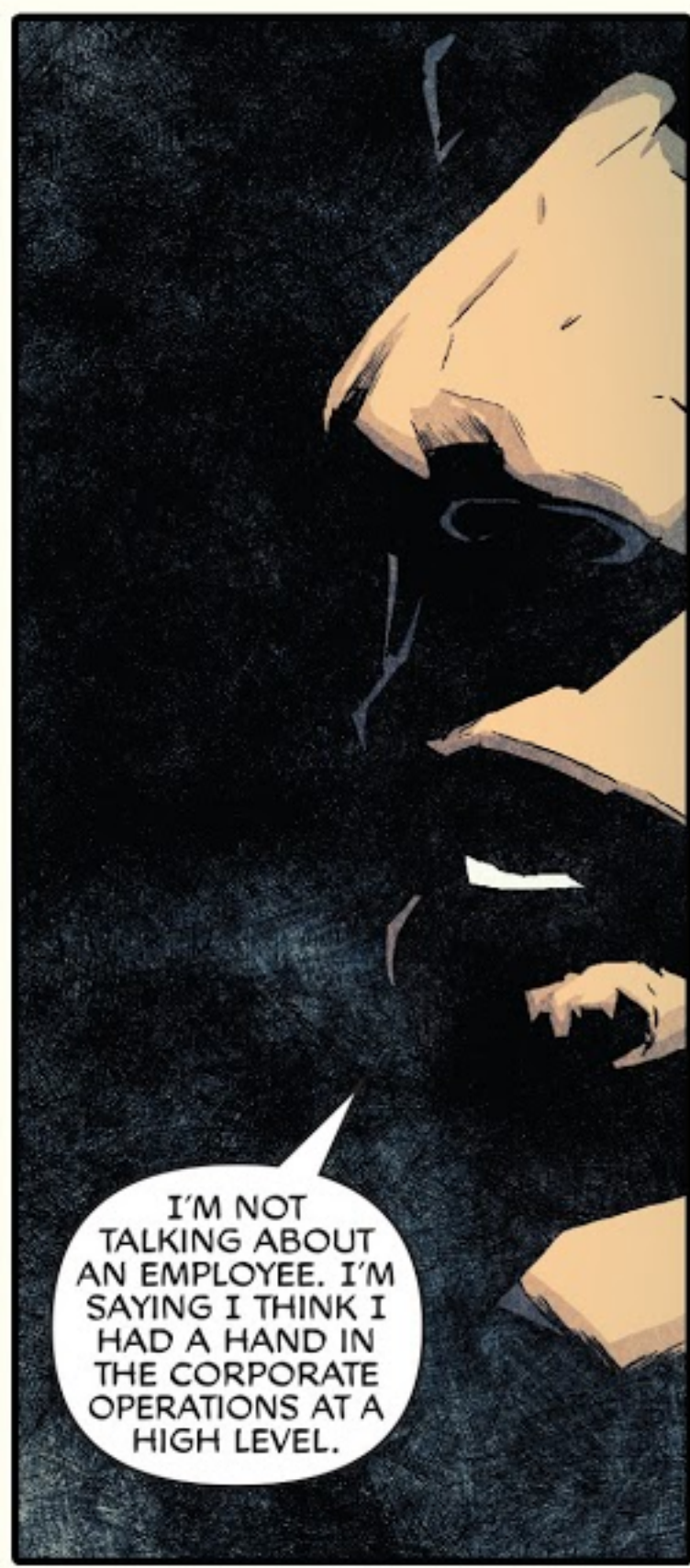
NO.

BUT I DON'T THINK I WAS JUST A PATIENT. SOMEHOW I FEEL LIKE... LIKE I HAD SOME KIND OF AUTHORITY THERE.

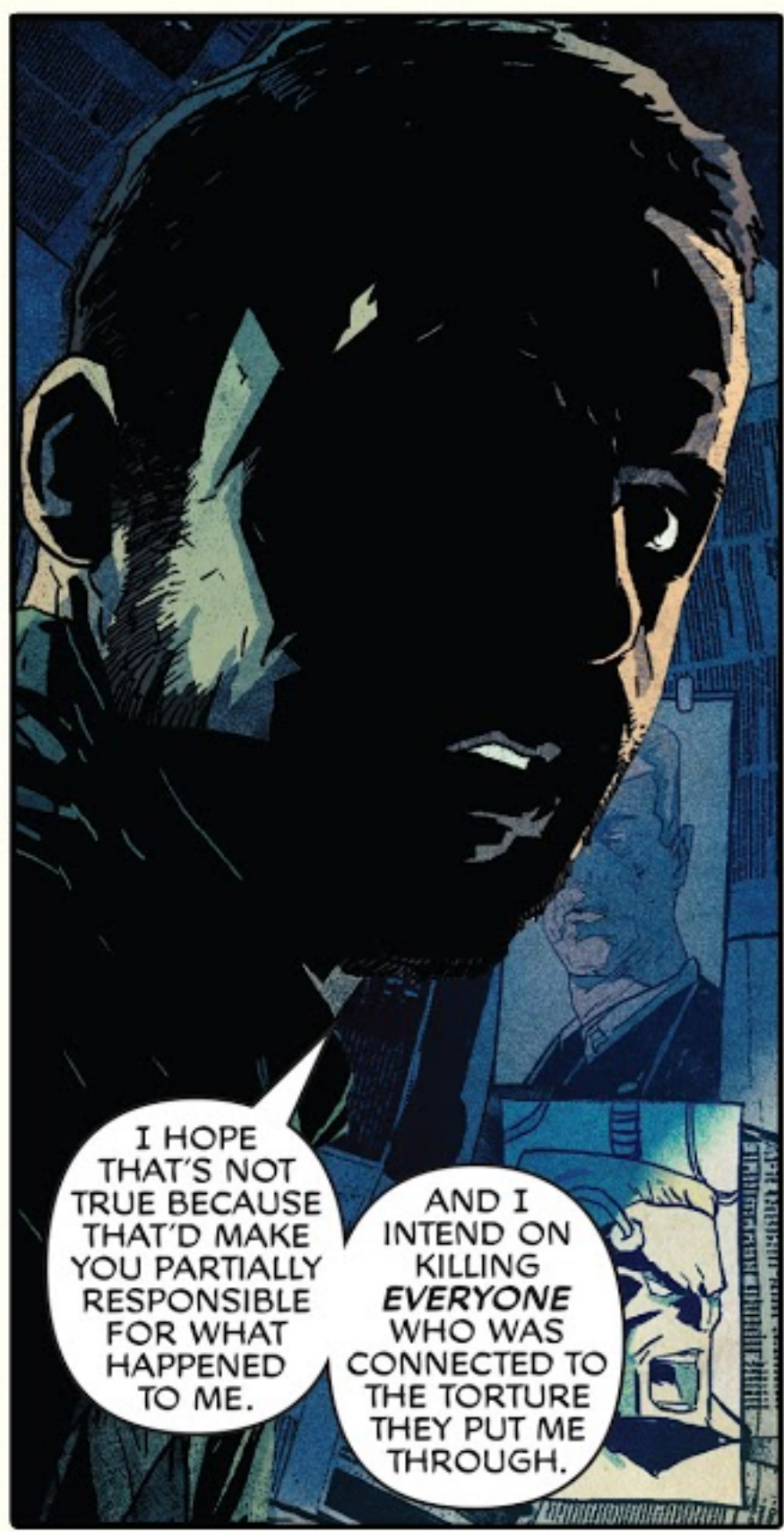


AUTHORITY?

I HEARD THEY USED EMPLOYEES FROM TIME TO TIME FOR THEIR SHIT-- BUT FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH, I NEVER SAW YOU WHILE THEY HAD ME THERE.



I'M NOT TALKING ABOUT AN EMPLOYEE. I'M SAYING I THINK I HAD A HAND IN THE CORPORATE OPERATIONS AT A HIGH LEVEL.



I HOPE THAT'S NOT TRUE BECAUSE THAT'D MAKE YOU PARTIALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT HAPPENED TO ME.

AND I INTEND ON KILLING **EVERYONE** WHO WAS CONNECTED TO THE TORTURE THEY PUT ME THROUGH.



BUT YOU WANT THE TOP DOG-- **THIS IS HIM!**

THIS IS THE SICK BASTARD THAT STARTED AND THEN OVERSAW 'THE PROJECT.' HE SELECTED HIS VICTIMS AND HAND PICKED EVERY DOCTOR THAT WORKED FOR HIM. SO YOU WANT ANSWERS? START WITH HIM. THOUGH, LAST I HEARD HE WENT CRAZY AND DISAPPEARED WITHOUT A TRACE.

DIRECTOR KRAMER. DON'T ASK ME WHAT HIS FIRST NAME WAS BECAUSE NO ONE CALLED HIM ANYTHING OTHER THAN DIRECTOR KRAMER. **EVER!**

I KNOW YOU'VE GOT A LOT OF PICTURES UP HERE-- BUT COME TAKE A LOOK. DON'T YOU RECOGNIZE HIM?



ARE
THERE MORE
PICTURES OF
HIM?



HERE'S A
COUPLE NEWS
ARTICLES WITH
SMALL PHOTOS.
WHY? WHAT'S
UP?

I KNOW
THIS IS GOING TO
SOUND CRAZY... BUT...
I THINK I'M THIS GUY.
THIS DIRECTOR
KRAMER.



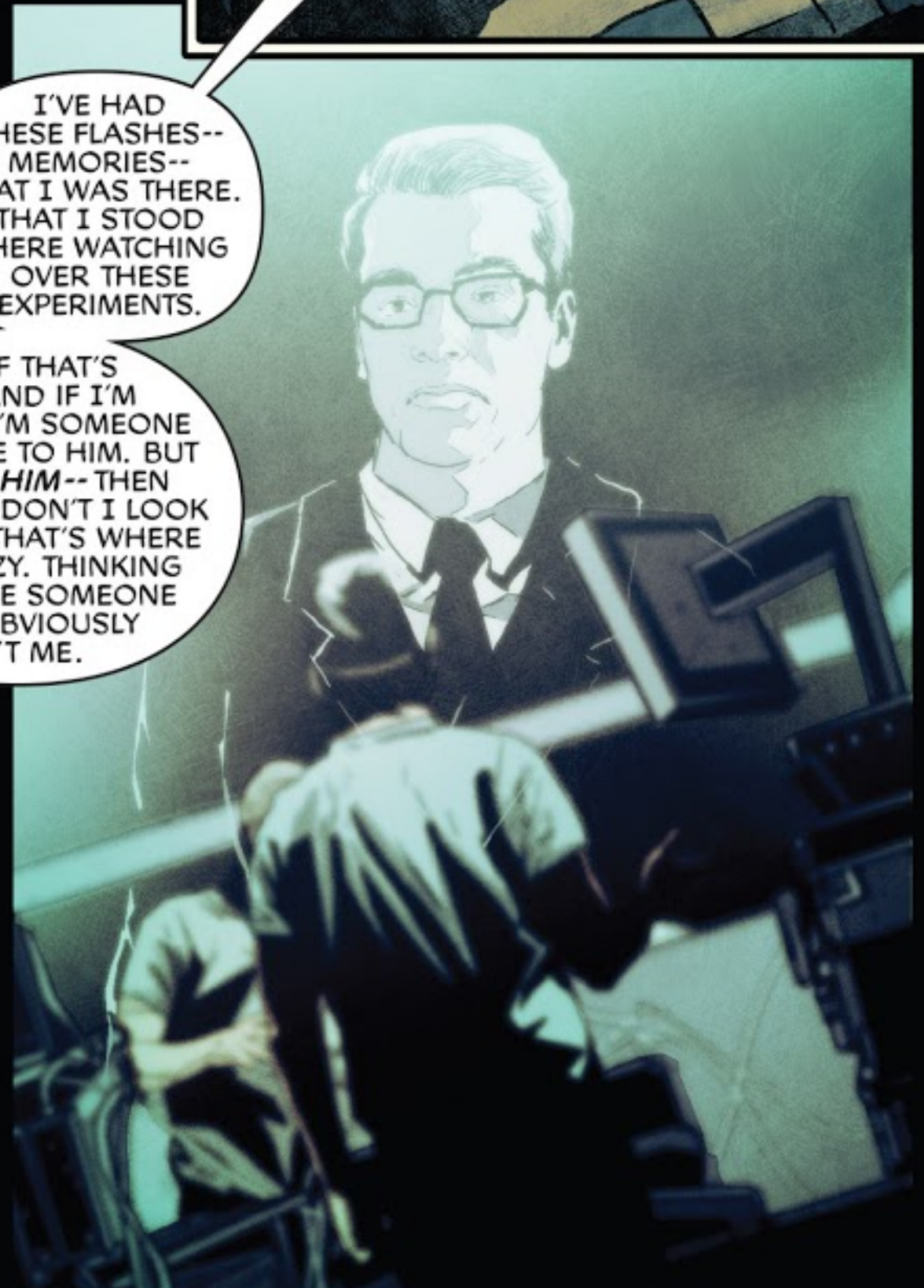
Jesus.

JUST
LISTEN--
AND TELL
ME IF THIS
MAKES ANY
SENSE...



I'VE HAD
THESE FLASHES--
MEMORIES--
THAT I WAS THERE.
THAT I STOOD
THERE WATCHING
OVER THESE
EXPERIMENTS.

AND IF THAT'S
TRUE, AND IF I'M
NOT HIM, I'M SOMEONE
VERY CLOSE TO HIM. BUT
IF I WAS *HIM*-- THEN
HOW-- WHY DON'T I LOOK
LIKE HIM? THAT'S WHERE
I GO CRAZY. THINKING
I MIGHT BE SOMEONE
WHO OBVIOUSLY
ISN'T ME.



ARE YOU KIDDING? THAT'S WHAT THEY DID THERE.

THEY DISSECTED AND DESTROYED ALL REMNANTS OF WHO WE WERE. NONE OF THEIR 'EXPERIMENTS' WERE SUPPOSED TO BE RECOGNIZABLE WHEN THEY WERE DONE. DON'T YOU GET THAT?!



LOOK WHAT THEY DID TO ME!

THEY CHANGED EVERYTHING-- BUT INSTEAD OF BEING SATISFIED WITH ALTERING MY HUMAN APPEARANCE-- THEY KEPT PUSHING IT.

AND PUSHING IT!



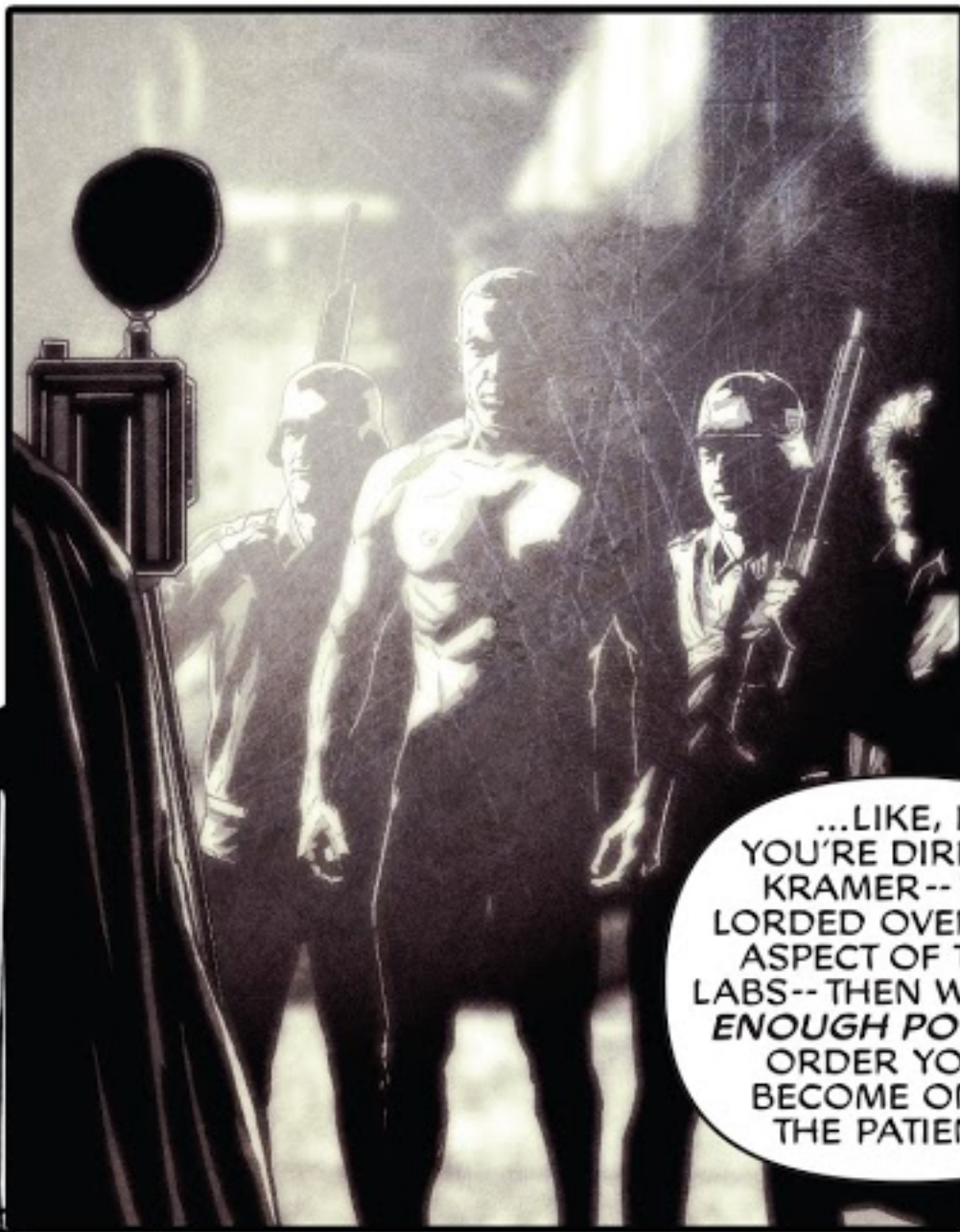
THEY WERE HOPING TO CREATE SOME KIND OF 'SUPER-HUMAN' BUT ALL THEY KEPT MAKING WERE 'FRANKENSTEINS.' AND AS EACH EXPERIMENT FAILED THE NEXT OPERATIONS BECAME EVEN MORE RADICAL. THERE WERE EVEN A FEW DOCTORS THAT WE HEARD HAD TIES TO HITLER'S ORIGINAL DEATH CAMPS.

THAT WAS THEIR BLUEPRINT! THE GOD-DAMN NAZI EXPERIMENTS OF THE FORTIES! ONLY *THIS TIME* THEY HAD MODERN MEDICINE AND TECHNOLOGY ON THEIR SIDE. DO YOU KNOW THE DEPTHS WITH WHICH MODERN SCIENCE ALLOWS THE DEPRAVED TO ANNIHILATE ANOTHER HUMAN BEING?



SO CHANGING YOUR LOOKS? THAT WAS EASY FOR THEM. YOUR QUESTION SHOULD BE MUCH BIGGER THAN THAT...





...LIKE, IF YOU'RE DIRECTOR KRAMER-- WHO LORDED OVER EVERY ASPECT OF THOSE LABS-- THEN WHO HAD **ENOUGH POWER** TO ORDER YOU TO BECOME ONE OF THE PATIENTS?



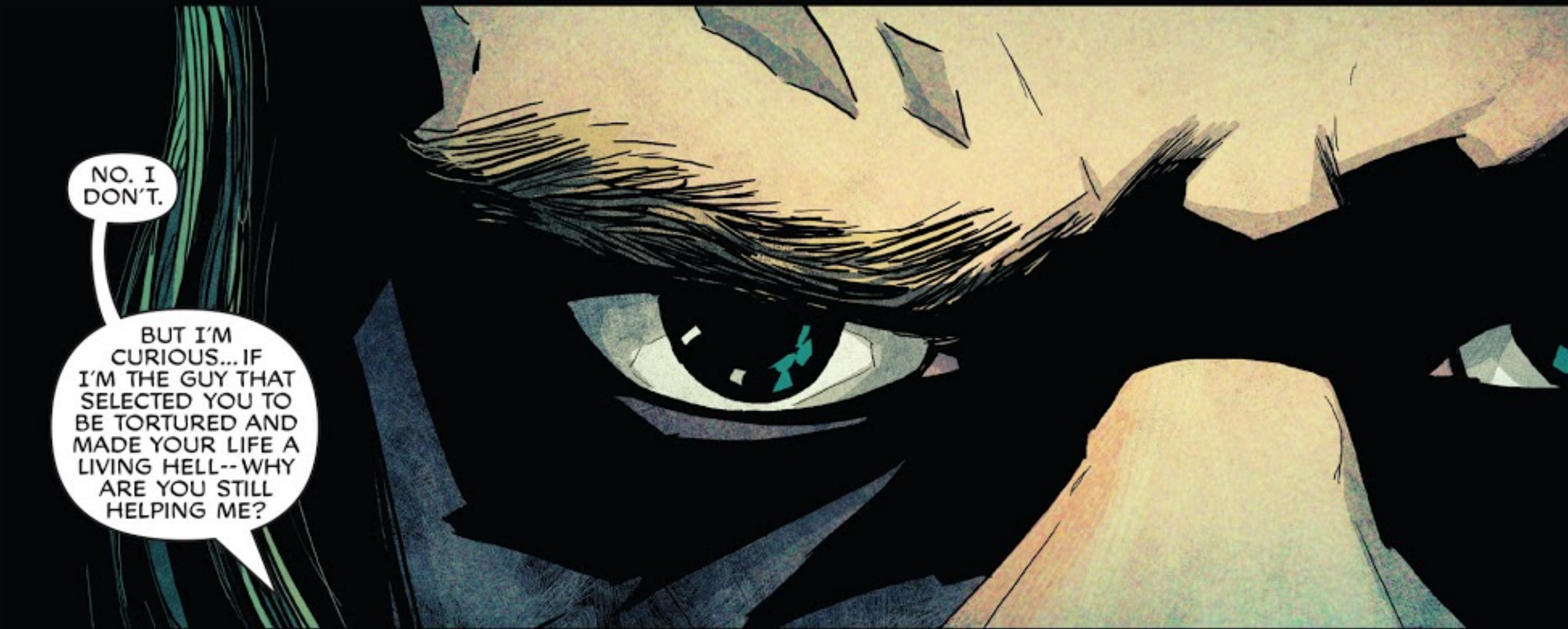
AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, WHY AREN'T YOU DEAD ALREADY IF YOU HAD SUCH HIGH POWERED ENEMIES OUT TO DESTROY YOU?



BECAUSE THEY DIDN'T EXPERIMENT ON PEOPLE THEY LIKED.

SO-- SURELY YOU MUST HAVE **SOME** RECOLLECTION OF WHAT THEY DID TO YOU?





NO. I DON'T.

BUT I'M CURIOUS... IF I'M THE GUY THAT SELECTED YOU TO BE TORTURED AND MADE YOUR LIFE A LIVING HELL-- WHY ARE YOU STILL HELPING ME?



BECAUSE I DON'T CARE WHO YOU ARE. I'LL DEAL WITH THAT LATER. AND YOU'VE GOT IT WRONG-- I'M NOT HELPING YOU-- **YOU'RE HELPING ME.** BECAUSE THE FIRST TIME I SAW YOU ON TV I KNEW WE WERE THE SAME. AND I KNEW THAT YOU HAD A CHANCE OF GETTING RID OF THE CREATURE INSIDE ME.

THAT WAS MY ONLY GOAL. GOT IT?? TO TAKE CARE OF MYSELF.



BUT I'M SMART ENOUGH TO KNOW THAT IF YOU JUST CURED ME-- YOU'RE *THE ONE* WITH THE FIREPOWER IN THIS ROOM, AND I DON'T LIKE MY ODDS IF YOU GET PISSED AT ME.

SO...YOU WANT A FEW MORE CLUES TO WHO OR WHAT YOU ARE-- THEN START WITH THIS GUY.

THEY CALL HIM 'THE AGENT.' HE USED TO WORK AT THE LABS. BUT WHEN EVERYTHING WENT DYSFUNCTIONAL AND THE PLACE SHUT DOWN THIS GUY STARTED A 'GUN-FOR-HIRE' BUSINESS WITH SOME OF THE REJECTS THEY EXPERIMENTED ON.



MAYBE HE'LL KNOW WHO YOU ARE.



THANKS, RICHARD. I'LL DO THAT. I'LL LOOK HIM UP...



BUT LET ME SEE IF I CAN NOW MAKE SOMETHING *CLEAR TO YOU!* YOU'RE NOT GOING ANYWHERE UNLESS *I SAY SO!* I'M NOT DONE WITH YOU YET--AND UNTIL I AM YOU DON'T LEAVE MY SIGHT!



PRELIMINARY
REPORTS INDICATE
THAT THE FACILITIES HIT LAST
WEEK WERE ALL FORMER
INSTALLATIONS THAT HOUSED
EXPERIMENTAL LABS
USING UNAUTHORIZED
TECHNIQUES.



WE
CORROBORATED
ATTACKS INSIDE
ARGENTINA, BOLIVIA,
NIGERIA AND
CANADA.

BUT OUR
CURRENT INTEL *IS*
LIMITED SINCE NO
SURVIVORS WERE
FOUND AT ANY OF
THE FOUR ATTACK
SITES.

THE ONLY
REASON WE'VE
BEEN ABLE TO
CONNECT THE FOUR
IS BECAUSE THE
SAME THINGS WERE
MISSING AT EACH OF
THEM-- FILES TO A
SECRET OPERATION
CALLED 'THE
PROJECT.'



WEAPONS.
ARTILLERY.
LAB EQUIPMENT.
NONE OF THAT
WAS TOUCHED.
WHOEVER DID THIS
KNEW EXACTLY
WHAT THEY WERE
LOOKING
FOR.



OUR SATELLITE
PHOTOS SHOW THAT
DAMAGE WAS LIMITED TO
THE SPECIFIC BUILDING--
WHICH HELD THE FILES--
EACH TIME.



WHAT'S OUR MISSION ON THIS?

I WAS GETTING TO THAT.

WE BELIEVE THAT JIM DOWNING IS SOMEHOW TIED TO ALL THESE ATTACKS. OR AT THE VERY LEAST HAS SOME PERIPHERAL CONNECTION.

THE GUY FROM THE NEWS?



YES. IT'S IN THE REPORTS I JUST HANDED ALL OF YOU. WE THINK THE SAME FACILITIES THAT CREATED OTHER 'SUPER HUMANS' MAY BE RESPONSIBLE FOR MR. DOWNING'S LATENT POWERS. WHICH WOULD MAKE HIS WHOLE 'MESSIAH-THING' MUCH EASIER TO EXPLAIN. OUR GOAL IS TO PROVIDE THE EVIDENCE FOR THAT CONCLUSION.

WHICH IS WHY WE'VE ALREADY ATTAINED ALL THE MEDICAL REPORTS FROM DOWNING'S CURRENT FLEET OF DOCTORS. THEY'RE TRYING TO ASCERTAIN WHETHER HIS POWERS CAN BE SAFELY USED ON OTHERS-- AS HIS NEWLY FORMED FOUNDATION HOPES THEY CAN.

BUT UNTIL WE CAN CONCLUSIVELY DETERMINE THE ORIGIN OF HIS POWERS-- OUR GOVERNMENT WANTS US TO MONITOR HIM AS A POSSIBLE *DOMESTIC THREAT*.



THE PROBLEM WE'VE HAD TO WORK AROUND SO FAR IS THE CONSTANT MEDIA ATTENTION THAT SEEMS TO SURROUND HIM. I CAN'T STRESS ENOUGH HOW IMPORTANT IT WILL BE TO NOT LET THE MEDIA CATCH A GLIMPSE OF ANY OF YOU.





UNFORTUNATELY, OUR JOBS WILL BE THAT MUCH MORE DIFFICULT SINCE WE HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO BUG HIS APARTMENT OR GET ANY SURVEILLANCE INTO THE APARTMENT BUILDING HE'S STAYING IN.

EXCUSE ME, AGENT FITZGERALD, BUT WHAT'S THE HANG UP THERE?

THE PROPERTY IS OWNED BY THE RAMUS CORPORATION, AND THE STRUCTURE SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN BUILT WITH SPIES LIKE US IN MIND. THE GOOD NEWS IS I HAVE A CONTACT FROM THE INSIDE WHO I'M SLOWLY WORKING ON.



HE HASN'T COMPLETELY COME ON BOARD-- SO I'LL STICK WITH HIM UNTIL HE DOES.

IN THE MEANTIME IT APPEARS THIS COULD BE A LONG, TOUGH CASE SO I'LL NEED YOU TO STAY VIGILANT. LET YOUR FAMILIES KNOW YOU'RE GOING TO BE OCCUPIED ON THIS FOR A WHILE.

AND IF YOU NEED ANY **ADDITIONAL MOTIVATION**-- WE'RE MISSING A FEW OF OUR OWN AGENTS FROM THOSE FOUR ATTACKS. THEIR WIVES AND CHILDREN WILL BE NOTIFIED LATER TODAY.



THANK YOU, GENTLEMEN. BE SAFE.

Santa Fe, New Mexico.





C'MON, CODY. YOU KNOW ATLANTA WASN'T MY FAULT. HOW WAS I SUPPOSED TO KNOW THAT GIRL WAS A DUDE? WITH ALL THE MAKE-UP AND STUFF--YOU EVEN SAID YOU MIGHT HAVE MADE THE SAME MISTAKE, TOO.

LOOK, BRO. I'M NOT HERE TO JUDGE YOU.

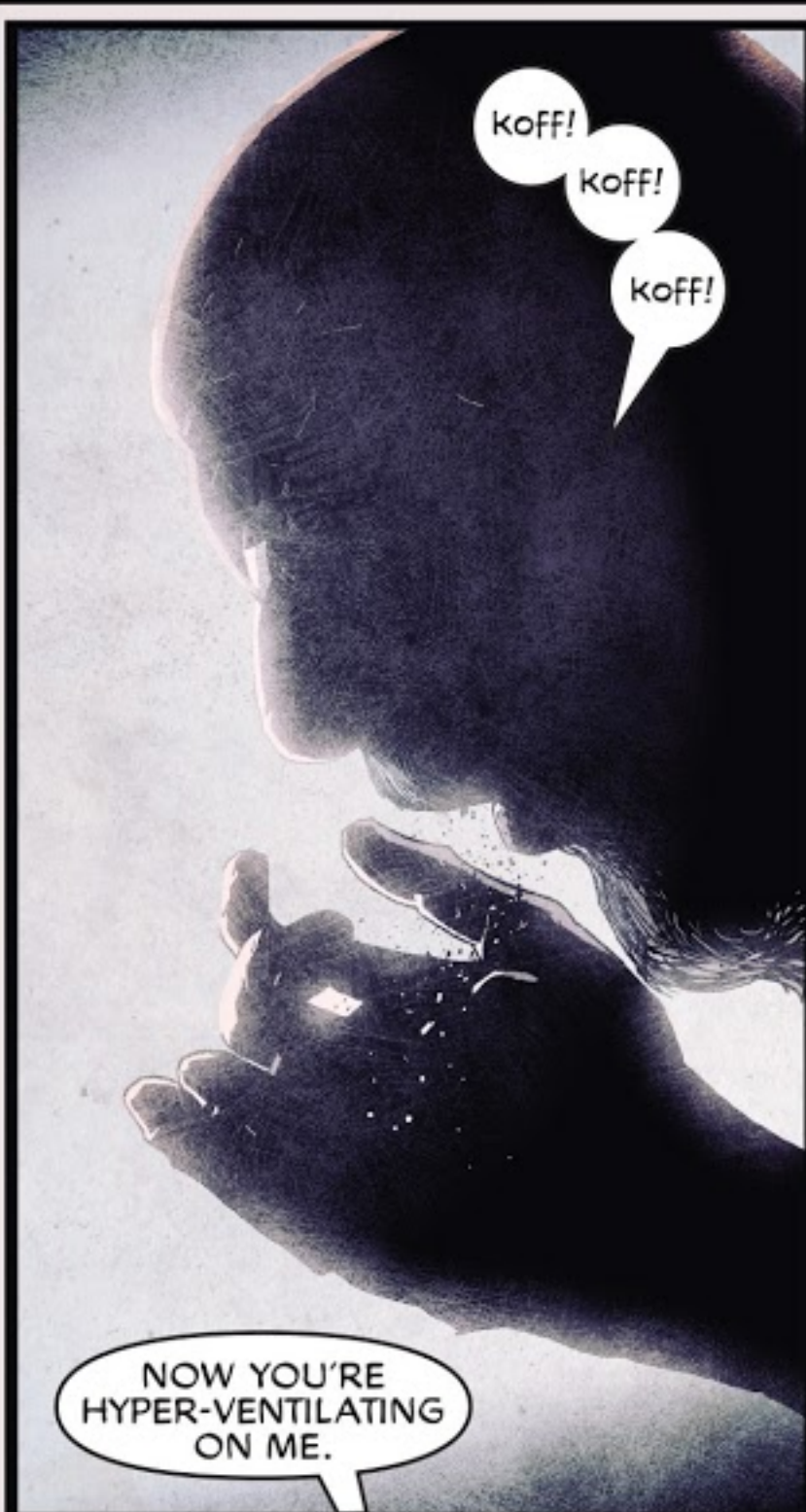


ALL I'M SAYING IS SINCE THE BOSS IS GETTING A LITTLE PARANOID WE JUST NEED TO FOCUS ON OUR JOB AND LET HIM DEAL WITH WHATEVER HE'S DEALING WITH.



BUT DON'T YOU THINK IT'S WEIRD WE'VE BEEN TO FIVE DIFFERENT CITIES THIS WEEK AND HE WON'T TELL US WHAT HE'S DOING?

AS I SAID, I'M NOT HERE TO JUDGE. YOU JUST NEED TO CALM DOWN--'CAUSE YOU'RE GETTING ALL SWEATY ON ME RIGHT NOW.



koff!
koff!
koff!

NOW YOU'RE HYPER-VENTILATING ON ME.



Christ...

I'M SPITTING UP BLOOD.





YEARRRRHHHHHHH



WHAT...?



lungs...



DAMMIT, GUYS! I SAID TO BUZZ ME IF YOU NEEDED ME. NOT SCREAM AT THE TOP OF YOUR...

**DON'T
MOVE! AND
DON'T TURN
AROUND!**

**I WANT YOU
TO ANSWER ME
ONE SIMPLE
QUESTION...**

**ARE YOU
THE ONE THEY
CALL 'THE
AGENT'?**

NEXT ISSUE:
INTERROGATION





image

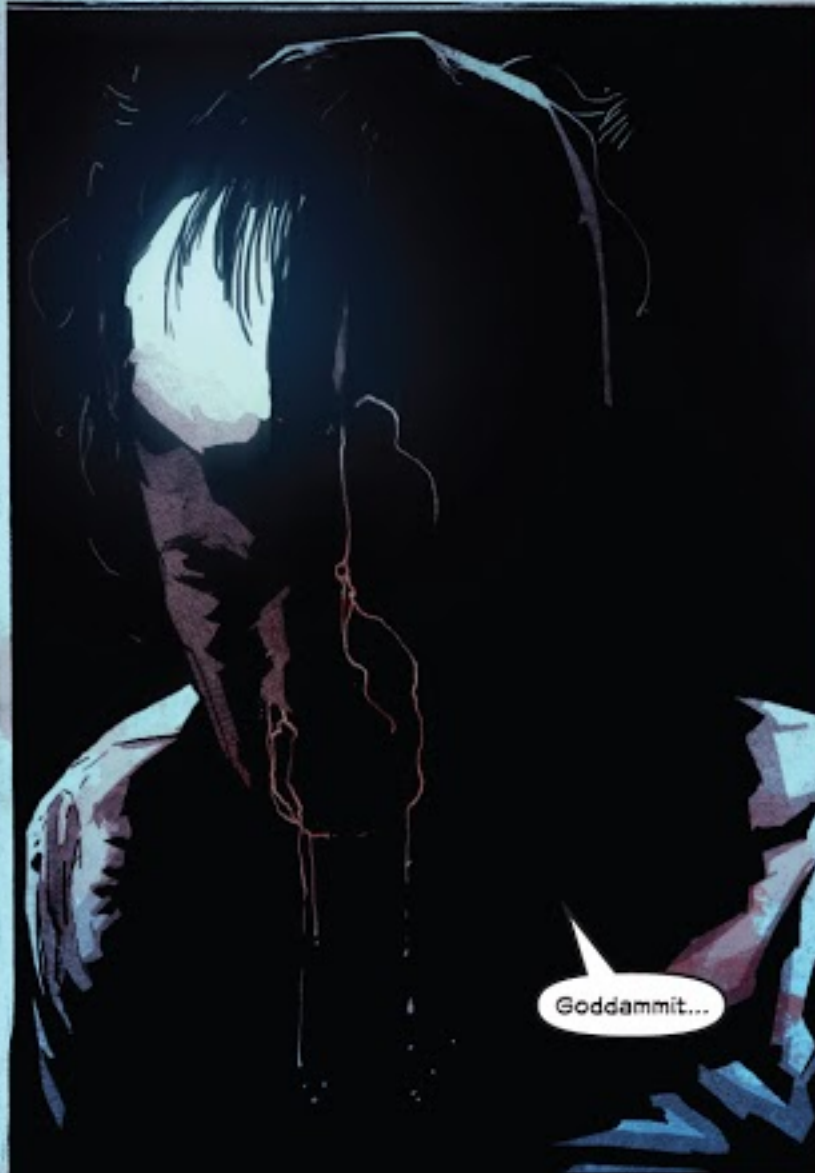
223 | **SEP** | **DIGITAL EDITION**

SPAWN

OF THE DEAD



TODD MCFARLANE
SZYMON KUDRANSKI





BECAUSE
WE DON'T
BELIEVE
YOU.



AND IF YOU DON'T
QUICKLY REGAIN YOUR
MEMORY-- THEN THE POUNDING
I'VE BEEN GIVING YOU WILL BE
NOTHING COMPARED TO WHAT MY
CLOAKED FRIEND HERE CAN DO. AND
I'VE SEEN HIM IN ACTION-- SO I
PROMISE YOU-- YOU DON'T
WANT HIM PISSSED OFF.

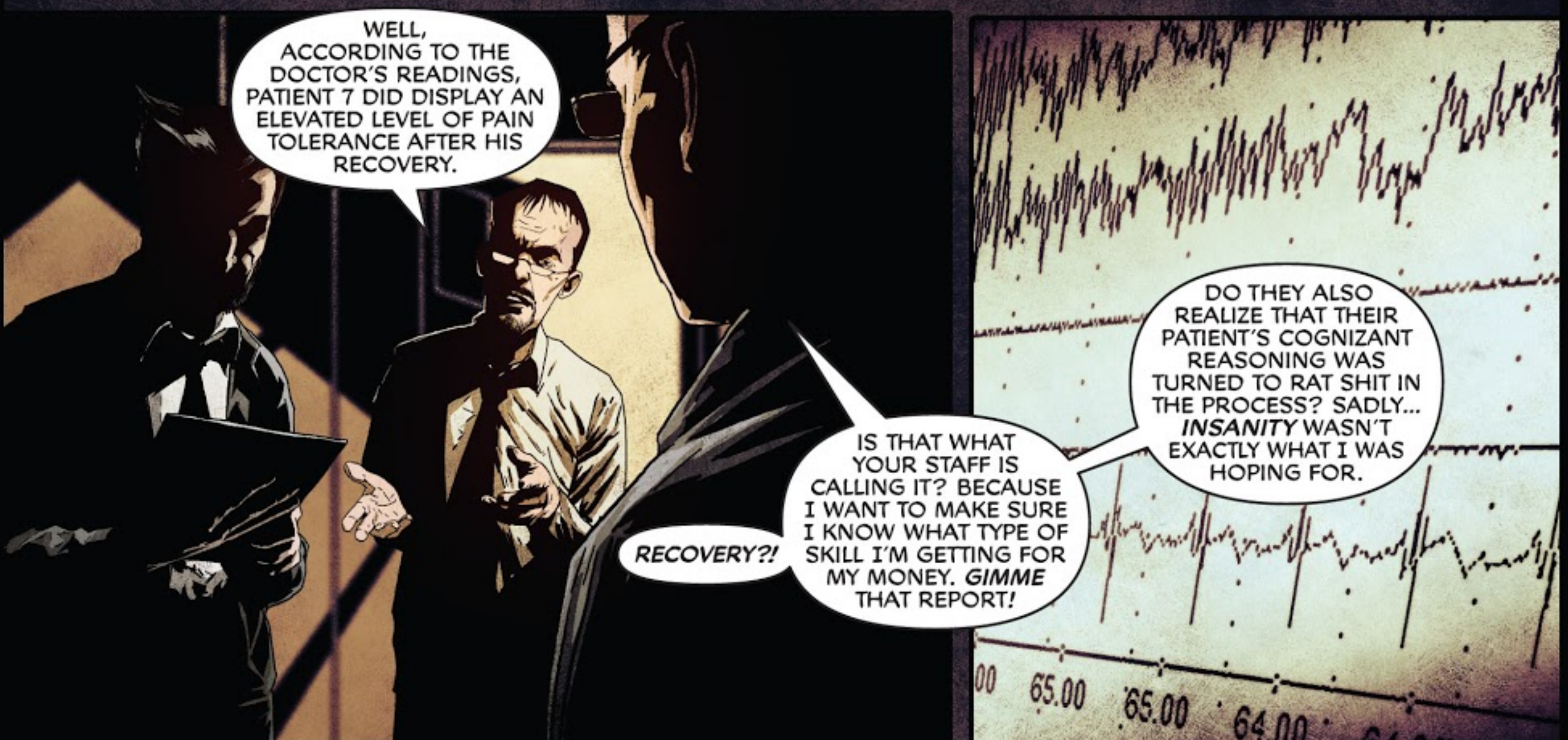
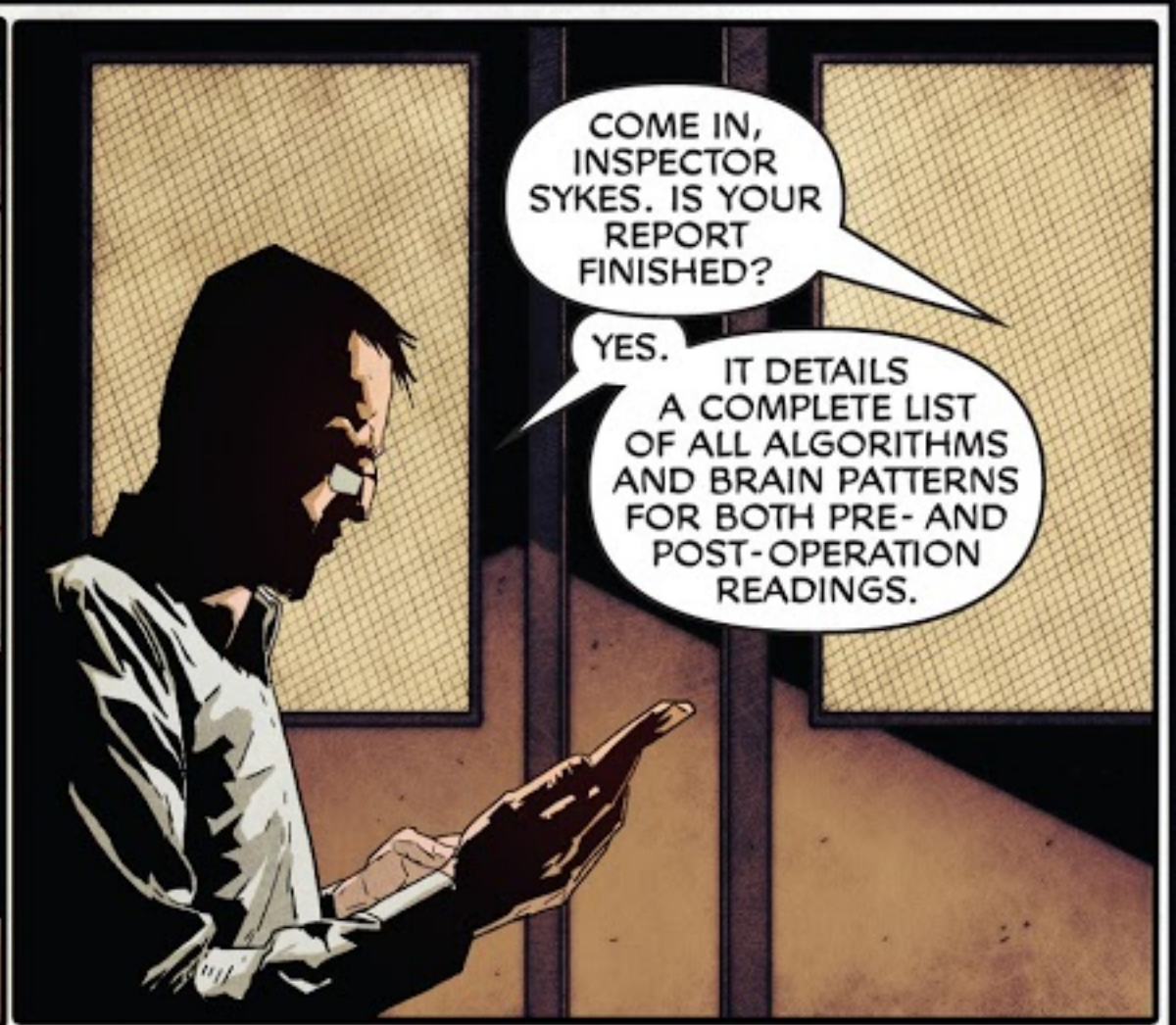
YOUR
HEART WON'T
BE ABLE TO
TAKE IT.

LOOK... YOU
ALREADY KNOW... I JUST
WORKED THERE A SHORT
TIME-- THEY ONLY CONSULTED
ME ON A COUPLE OF THEIR
LONG TERM AGENDAS. I
NEVER WORKED ON ANY
OF THE EXPERIMENTS
DIRECTLY!

COOL.

THEN LET'S
CHAT ABOUT THOSE
'COUPLE AGENDAS'--
AND WHERE **EXACTLY**
YOU FIT IN.

Years earlier.

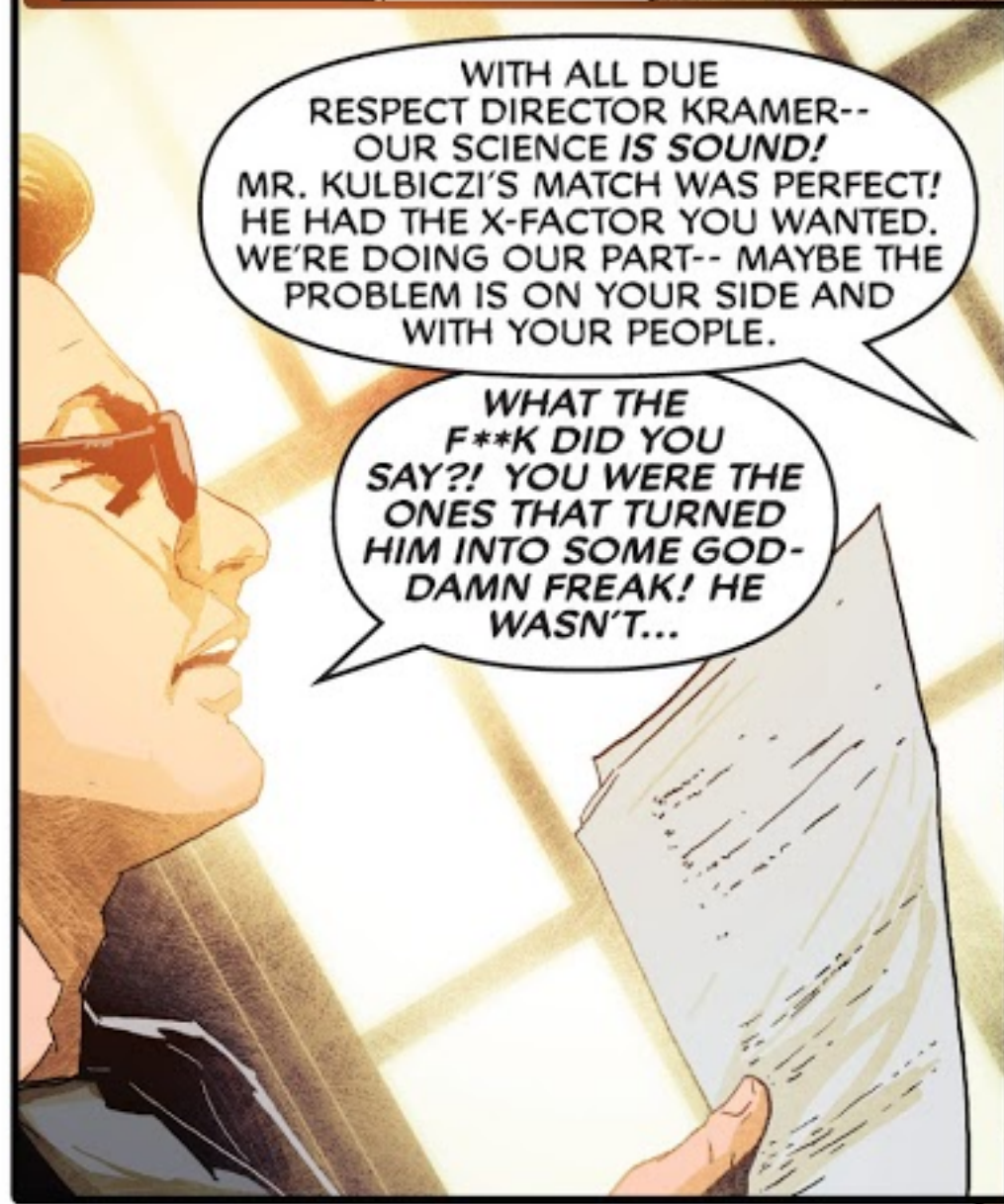




I UNDER-
STAND.

DO
YOU?

THEN WHY
THE HELL IS NONE
OF THIS WORKING?
IT'S BEEN OVER A
YEAR! I'M STARTING
TO DOUBT THE
VALIDITY OF YOUR
SCIENCE.



WITH ALL DUE
RESPECT DIRECTOR KRAMER--
OUR SCIENCE *IS* SOUND!
MR. KULBICZI'S MATCH WAS PERFECT!
HE HAD THE X-FACTOR YOU WANTED.
WE'RE DOING OUR PART-- MAYBE THE
PROBLEM IS ON YOUR SIDE AND
WITH YOUR PEOPLE.

WHAT THE
F**K DID YOU
SAY?! YOU WERE THE
ONES THAT TURNED
HIM INTO SOME GOD-
DAMN FREAK! HE
WASN'T...



OKAY-- OKAY,
THAT'S ENOUGH,
GENTLEMEN!



WE CAN FINISH
THIS DISCUSSION
ONCE WE'VE THOROUGHLY
HAD THE CHANCE TO REVIEW
YOUR REPORT, INSPECTOR.
THANK YOU FOR COMING
AND WE'LL CALL YOU
TOMORROW-- RIGHT
AFTER LUNCH.

LUCKY
ME.



LOOK, KRAMER--
WE'VE GONE OVER
THIS A DOZEN TIMES! THE
GOVERNMENT NEVER SAID THIS
WOULD WORK RIGHT OUT OF THE
GATE. IT WAS ALWAYS MEANT TO
BE A WORK IN PROGRESS. AND
ACCORDING TO THOSE CHARTS,
PROGRESS *WAS MADE*--
HOWEVER SMALL. YOUR
JOB IS TO FOSTER THAT
MOMENTUM.

SO WE
CAN *BOTH* GET
TO THE ULTIMATE
RESULTS WE'RE
LOOKING
FOR.

THEN...
I'M GOING TO
NEED MORE
PATIENTS. LOTS
MORE.



YOU DIDN'T PICK
D.N.A. 'MATCHES'--
YOU PICKED PEOPLE!
JUST LIKE ME!! AND YOU
ROBBED US OF EVERYTHING
WE EVER HELD DEAR.
SO, YOU TELL ME-- IN
WORDS AS SIMPLE AS
POSSIBLE...



WHAT
DID I HAVE
INSIDE ME THAT
MADE ME SO
SPECIAL?

YOU
WOULDN'T
UNDER-
STAND.

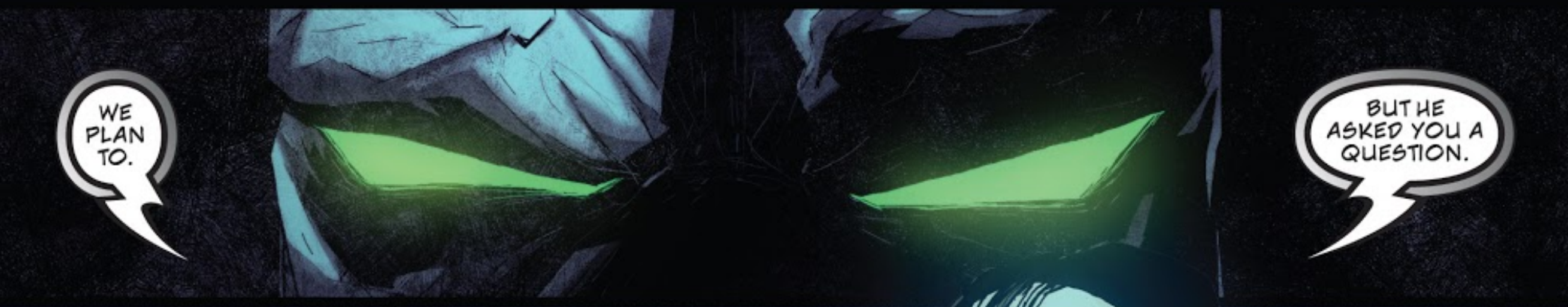


THEN
HUMOR
US.



YOU SAID
YOU HAD THE
FILES FROM
THE 'PROJECT'.
IT SHOULD
ALL BE IN
THERE...

JUST
READ
IT.



WE
PLAN
TO.

BUT HE
ASKED YOU A
QUESTION.

THE PEOPLE
YOU WORKED
ON-- WHAT WERE
YOU LOOKING
FOR? WHAT WAS
THE GOAL? AND
HOW LONG WAS
IT SUPPOSED
TO LAST?

I DON'T
KNOW... I
WAS GONE
BY THEN.

IT DOESN'T
MATTER, YOU HELPED
FIND SOME OF THEM!
HOW MANY MORE WERE
YOU WILLING TO SACRI-
FICE BEFORE SOMEONE
SAID *ENOUGH*? I KNOW
IT WASN'T TWENTY. OR
THIRTY! OR EVEN
FORTY!

*FORTY-
SIX!*

THAT
WAS IT?!
THAT WAS
THE LAST ONE
THEY WORKED
ON BEFORE
BEING SHUT
DOWN.

NO.

THERE
WEREN'T
ANY
MORE?





THEN
HOW DO
YOU
EXPLAIN
ME?

WHAT
ARE YOU
TALKING
ABOUT?

I'M **FORTY-SEVEN!!**

I'M THE LAST ONE THEY
EXPERIMENTED ON! THE
LAST ONE THEY CREATED!
SO I'LL ASK YOU AGAIN.
WHAT WERE YOU LOOKING
FOR WHEN YOU WERE
IN THOSE LABS?

THE SAME THING
EVERYONE WANTED--
PERFECTION! THEY WANTED
TO CREATE A FLAWLESS HUMAN
BEING. FOR WHAT PURPOSE?
I DON'T KNOW, THEY NEVER
TOLD ME. MY JOB WAS TO
JUST FIND THOSE THAT
ALIGNED WITH THEIR
SPECS.

WHAT
ELSE?

I TOLD
YOU I DON'T
KNOW! THEY DIDN'T
LET ME INTO THEIR
SECRET MEETINGS
OR CONFERENCE
CALLS.

THEN YOU'RE
GOING TO HAVE TO
DIG A LITTLE DEEPER
INTO YOUR MEMORY.
AND I'LL HELP WITH
THE '**DIGGING**'
PART.

THOSE
BUMPS UNDER
YOUR SKIN-- CAN YOU
FEEL THEM MOVING?
MULTIPLYING?
THEY'RE BUGS.

UNGH...!

WHAT'S THE
MATTER? IS IT
HURTING?

HERE...
LET'S SEE WHAT
HAPPENS WHEN THEY
BEGIN EATING
YOUR BRAIN!

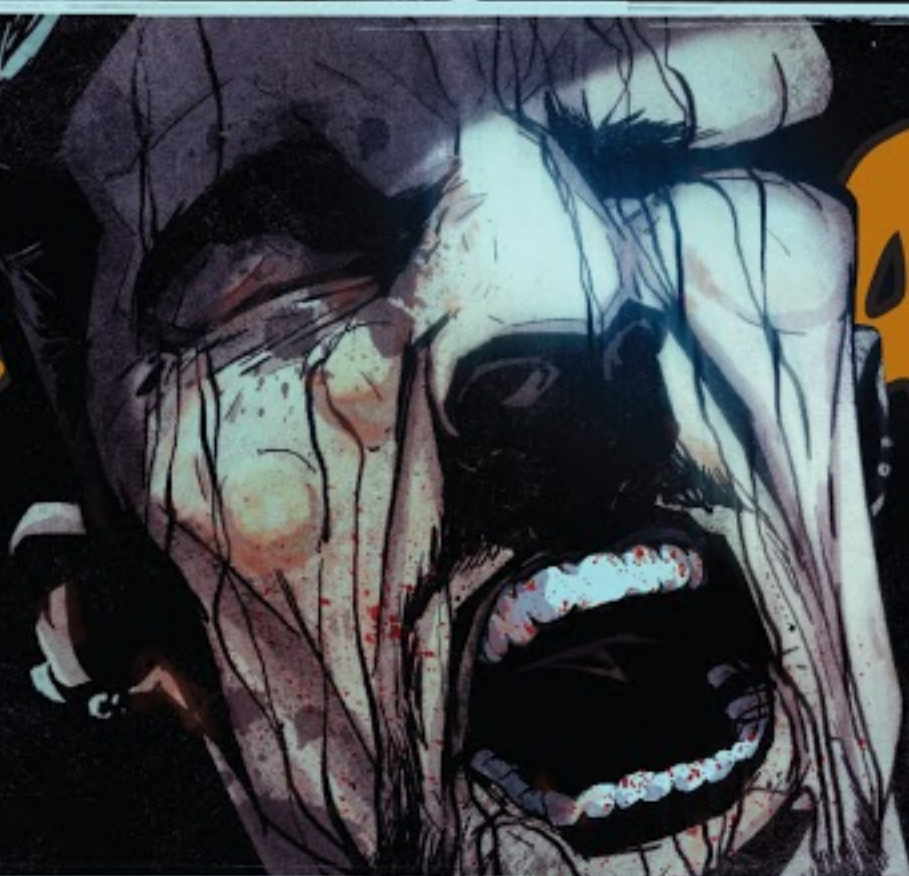


YEEEEAAAAAAA

NOW TELL ME--
WHO HAD THE MOST
TO LOSE? I ASSUME
NO ONE WAS HAPPY NEAR
THE END. I WANT TO KNOW
WHO HAD THE POWER TO
KEEP IT GOING EVEN
AFTER IT WAS SHUT
DOWN?

AND FOR
WHAT
PURPOSE?

ARG



NO!
THAT'S
UNACCEPT-
ABLE!



I UNDERSTAND
THE STRESS EVERYONE
IS UNDER-- I FELT THE SAME
WAY IN THE BEGINNING--
BUT I'VE POURED TOO MANY
YEARS OF MY LIFE INTO THIS!
SO DON'T SIT THERE AND TELL
ME YOU'RE HITTING A DEAD
END AND THAT OUR
PROGRESS IS PLATEAUIING!
FIND THE CATALYST
YOU NEED.



WE'VE TRIED.
BELIEVE ME-- NONE OF
US WANTED TO HAVE THIS
MEETING. BUT THE FACTS REMAIN:
WE'VE DONE THREE DOZEN
EXPERIMENTS WITH NOMINAL
SUCCESS. AND OUR LAST FOUR
PATIENTS HAVE SHOWN LITTLE
TO NO ADVANCEMENT OVER
THEIR PREDECESSORS.

**KNOCK
KNOCK**

COME
IN.

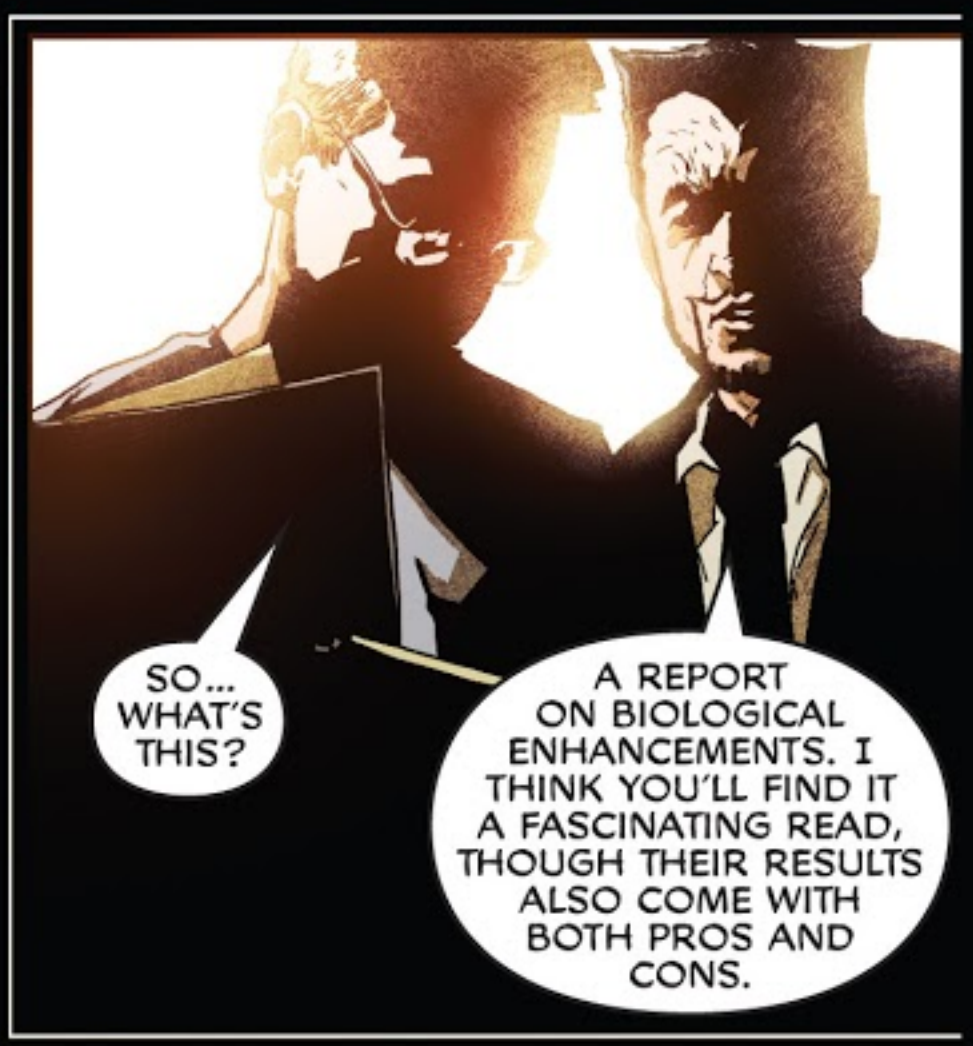


WYNN...? WHAT'RE YOU DOING HERE? I THOUGHT YOU WERE IN EUROPE?

I WAS. I JUST GOT BACK A FEW HOURS AGO. BUT GIVEN THE NATURE OF SOME OF YOUR CONCERNS I THOUGHT I'D COME SEE YOU IMMEDIATELY. DO YOU MIND IF WE SPEAK IN PRIVATE?

WHY NOT? IT'S NOT LIKE WE'RE ACCOMPLISHING ANYTHING HERE!

GENTLEMEN-- YOU'RE ALL DISMISSED FOR TODAY. THANK YOU FOR COMING.



SO... WHAT'S THIS?

A REPORT ON BIOLOGICAL ENHANCEMENTS. I THINK YOU'LL FIND IT A FASCINATING READ, THOUGH THEIR RESULTS ALSO COME WITH BOTH PROS AND CONS.



UM-- INSPECTOR SYKES-- I'D LIKE TO GET YOUR INPUT ON THIS MATTER. SO, PLEASE... STAY.



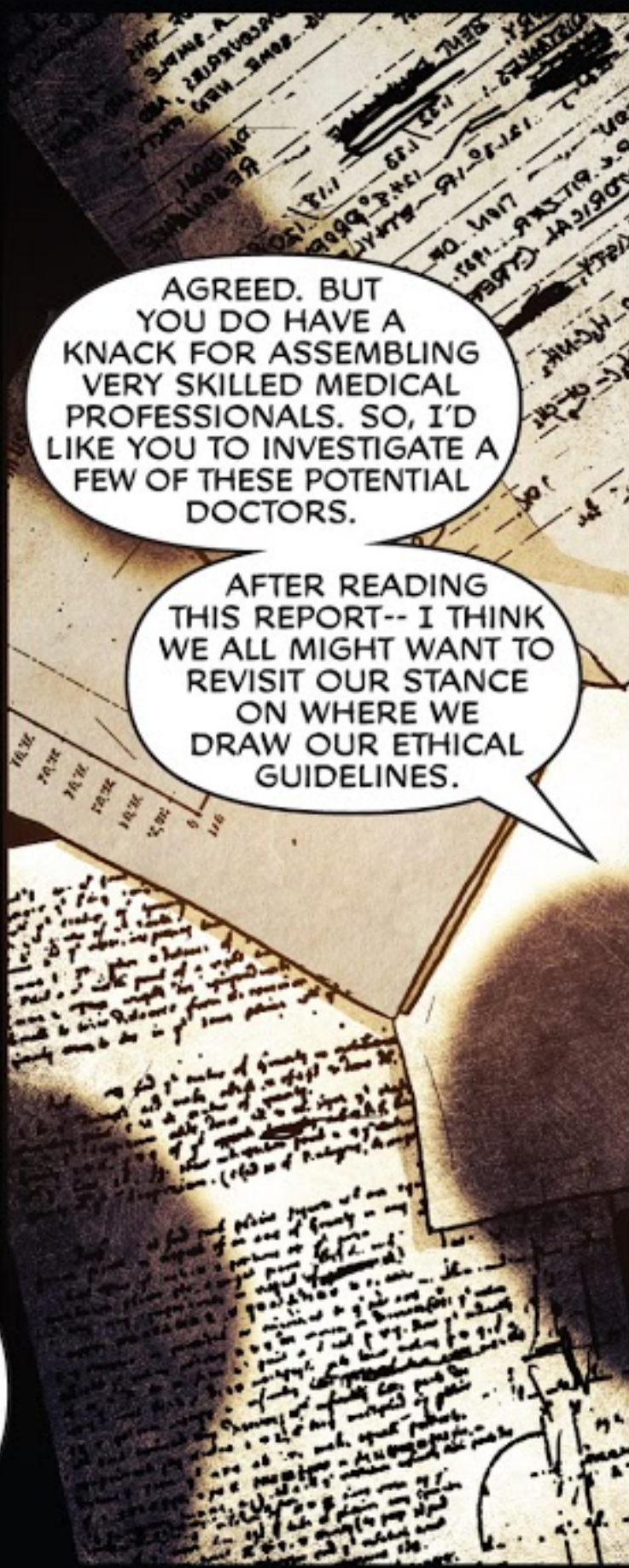
IT SAYS MOST OF THESE EXPERIMENTS WERE DONE THROUGH COVERT MEANS, DECADES AGO. HOW DOES THAT TIE INTO OUR PROGRAM?

BECAUSE I THINK WE'VE BEEN OVER-THINKING OUR GOALS. TRYING TO CREATE NEW SCIENCE WHEN PERHAPS SOME OF IT WAS RIGHT UNDER OUR NOSES.



I'M NOT SURE I UNDERSTAND.

BIO-ENHANCEMENTS AREN'T MY FIELD OF EXPERTISE. IT'S TO FIND THOSE WHO HAVE THE MOST SKILLS IN SPECIALIZED FIELDS. THAT'S HOW I'VE BUILT MY STAFF AND FOUND YOUR PATIENTS.



AGREED. BUT YOU DO HAVE A KNACK FOR ASSEMBLING VERY SKILLED MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS. SO, I'D LIKE YOU TO INVESTIGATE A FEW OF THESE POTENTIAL DOCTORS.

AFTER READING THIS REPORT-- I THINK WE ALL MIGHT WANT TO REVISIT OUR STANCE ON WHERE WE DRAW OUR ETHICAL GUIDELINES.





UNDER WHOSE
AUTHORITY DID YOU
PUT THIS REPORT
TOGETHER?

BECAUSE IF WE
CONTEMPLATE ANY OF WHAT'S
IN HERE-- IT'LL COMPROMISE AND
TAINT EVERYTHING WE'VE DONE.
TYING OURSELVES TO THE NAZI REGIME...
THAT'S *CORPORATE SUICIDE*! I KNOW
WE'VE BENT SOME RULES IN THE
PAST, BUT THIS-- THIS ISN'T THE
KIND OF THING WE DO!



YOU'RE
WRONG.

THIS IS
EXACTLY
WHAT WE
DO.



AFTER THAT, OUR
WHOLE MISSION BEGAN
TO CHANGE. NEW POLICIES...
DIFFERENT PROTOCOLS. ALL
WERE PUT IN PLACE WITHOUT ANY
INPUT FROM THE DOCTORS
ON STAFF. THEN THEY BROUGHT
IN THEIR OWN HAND SELECTED
PHYSICIANS. THAT'S WHEN
I KNEW MY DAYS WERE
NUMBERED.

YOU CAN'T IMAGINE
THE FRICTION ALL THAT CAUSED.
BUT THEN WE TURNED A CORNER.
DESPITE THE NIGHTMARES THAT
WERE PLAYING OUT IN THE OPERATING
ROOMS-- WE BEGAN GETTING
IMPROVED RESULTS. WE EVEN
THOUGHT THIS '*NEW DIRECTION*'
HAD LED US TO OUR *FIRST*
SUCCESS.



I JUST GOT
OUT OF A MEETING AND
EVERYONE FEELS CONFIDENT OUR
NEWEST PATIENT WILL CONTINUE
SHOWING IMPROVEMENT. HIS GENE
SPLITTING AND SUBSEQUENT HEALING
ARE RIGHT ON TRACK, AND HIS BODY
HAS ACCEPTED HIS NEW ORGAN
TRANSPLANTS. THE ONLY MINOR
CONCERNS FROM THE DOCTORS IS
THERE SEEMS TO BE A FEW GAPS
IN THE META-SEQUENCING
RATES.

THOUGH
I'M TRYING
TO GET MY
HEAD WRAPPED
AROUND
THAT RIGHT
NOW.

ANY TIME
FRAME ON
THAT?

YEAH, TWO
MONTHS AGO! BUT
EVERY TIME I LOOK AT
THESE CHARTS THEY
REMINDE ME OF
SOMETHING.



I'M SURE
IT'LL COME TO
YOU. BUT YOUR
RECENT EFFORTS ARE
TO BE COMMENDED.
I'M SURE THE
PRESIDENT
WILL BE...

THAT'S
IT!

WE DID
A PROGRAM
YEARS AGO
SANCTIONED BY
THE BOSNIAN
PRESIDENT. I
KNEW THOSE
CHARTS LOOKED
FAMILIAR!



LET ME GRAB
SOMETHING.

I WANT TO
CROSS
REFERENCE
A FEW
READINGS.



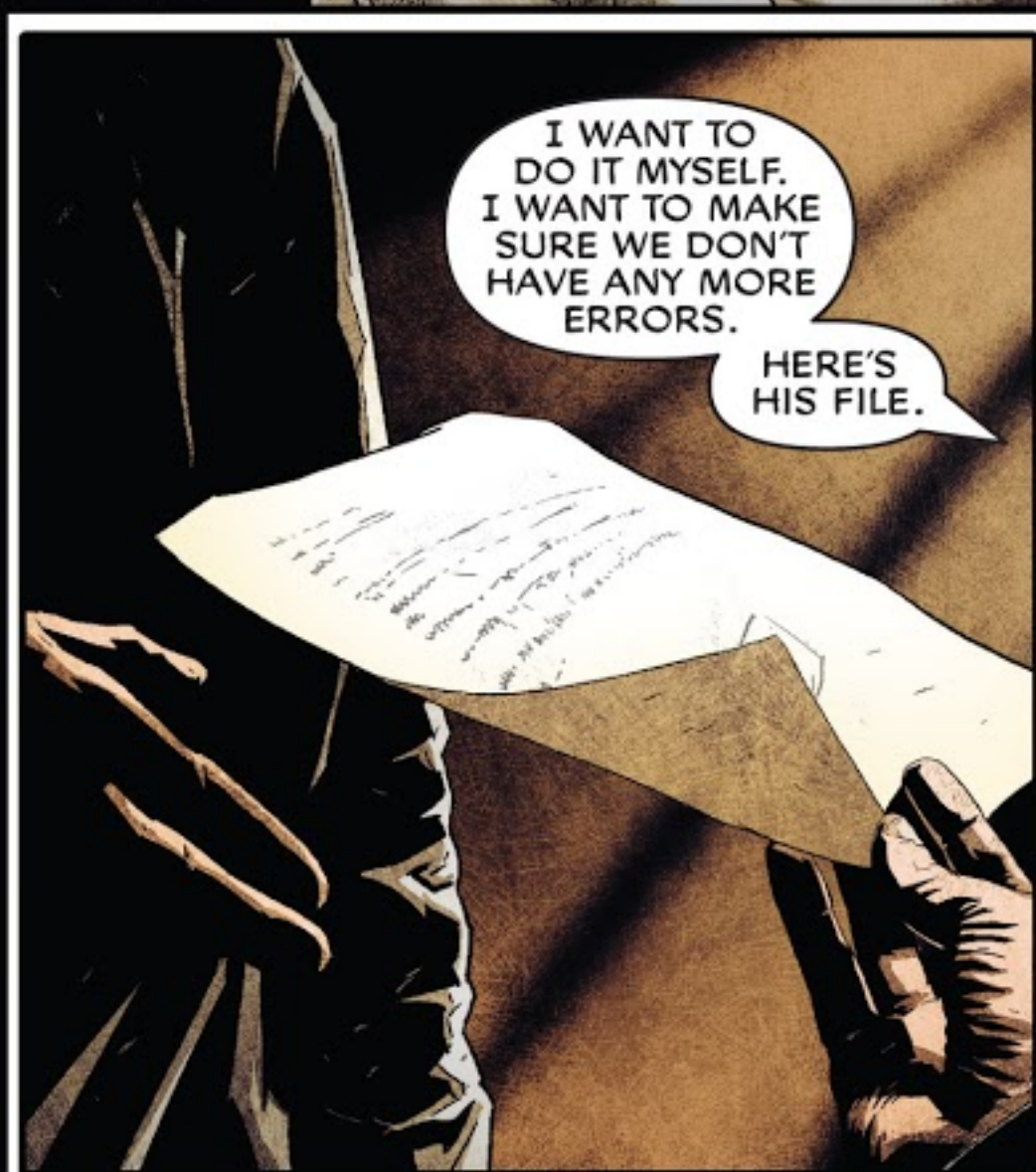
My
god.

YOU FIND
SOMETHING?

THEY LINK UP!
IF WHAT I THINK IS
TRUE, THEN I'VE FOUND
OUR CONNECTION.
I'VE FOUND WHY
THERE'S A GAP!



YOU
SAID SYKES
WAS ABOUT TO
CHECK OUR NEXT
POTENTIAL
SUBJECT. DON'T
LET HIM!



I WANT TO
DO IT MYSELF.
I WANT TO MAKE
SURE WE DON'T
HAVE ANY MORE
ERRORS.

HERE'S
HIS FILE.





THAT'S WHEN
IT REALLY BEGAN--
WHEN KRAMER STARTED
TO LOSE HIS GRIP ON
REALITY. HE POURED ALL
HIS ENERGY INTO MAKING
SURE YOU WERE GOING
TO BE 'THE ONE'! HE
CONVINCED ALL OF US THIS
WAS FINALLY GOING TO
BE OUR BIG BREAK-
THROUGH.

BUT
I DIDN'T
WORK OUT--
DID I?

DID
I?

NO.

AND HE BLAMED
EVERYTHING AFTER
THAT ON YOUR FAILURE--
BECOMING OBSESSED AND
PARANOID AT TRYING TO
REDEEM HIMSELF AND
THE PROJECT.



HE
HATED YOU,
RICHARD.
YOU COULD
FEEL IT.



YOU
CAN'T
KNOW
THAT!



YOU'RE
LYING!!

AAAAARGGHHH



I WANT THE TRUTH!

THAT IS... THE TRUTH. I SAW IT WITH MY OWN EYES. HE WAS... *F**KING CRAZY!*

AND HE TOOK US *ALL DOWN* WHILE FIGHTING HIS INSANITY! EVERYTHING WE'D WORKED FOR... HE TOOK FROM US!



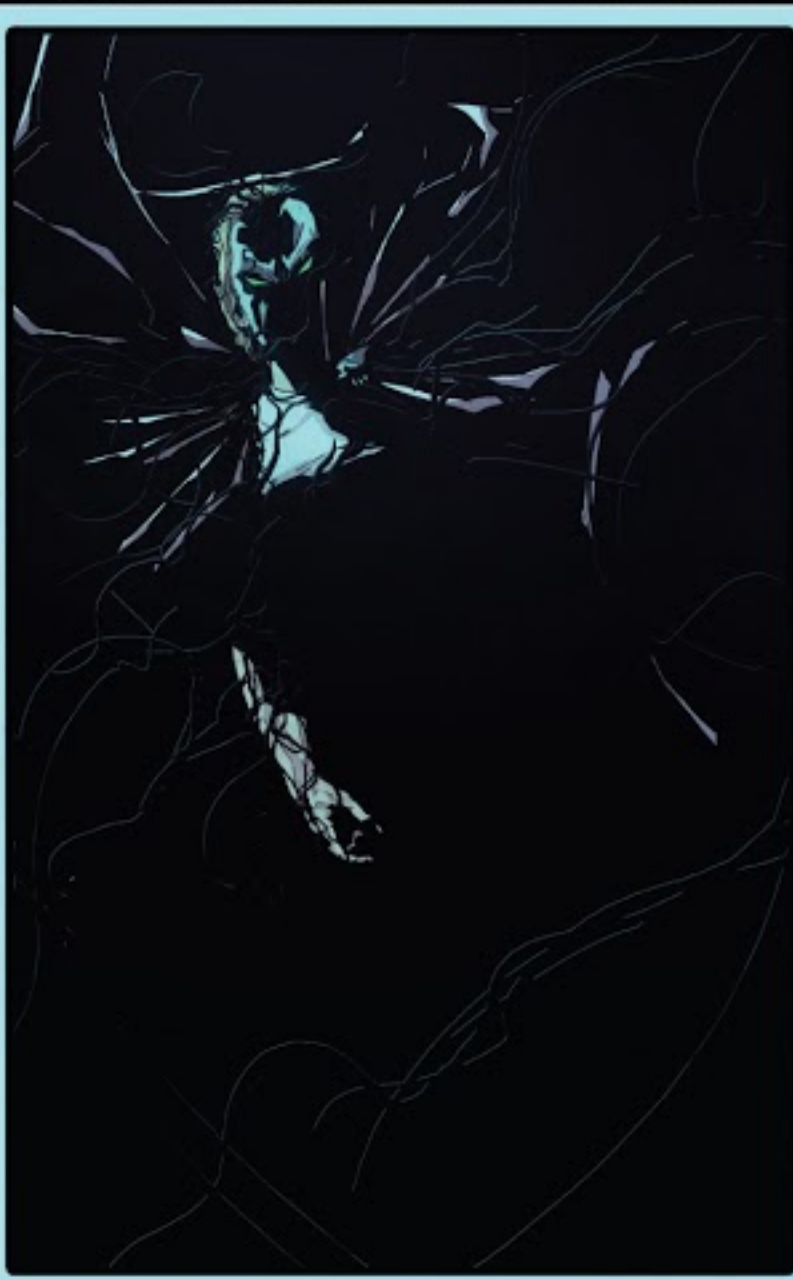
SO YOU WANT ANSWERS TO WHAT THE HELL WAS GOING ON THERE-- ASK HIM! IT WAS HIS BABY!



LOOK AT ME.

WHAT?

LOOK AS DEEP AS YOU CAN AND TELL ME WHAT YOU SEE.



KRAMER... ?



IS THAT YOU?



I DON'T
KNOW!!

THAT'S WHAT
I'M TRYING TO FIND
OUT! I CAN'T
REMEMBER!

SO IF
RICHARD DIDN'T
WORK OUT-- WHY
DID THEY STILL
GO ON?!

BECAUSE
HE WOULDN'T
STOP! EVER!

SO IT
WAS WYNN
THAT DID
THIS
TO ME?

YOU'RE NOT
LISTENING! IT...
WAS... KRAMER!
IT WAS ALWAYS
KRAMER!

WYNN JUST
BEGAN PLAYING
ON HIS... ON
YOUR... INSTABILITY.
AND WYNN WAS
VERY GOOD AT
THAT...



"... MANIPULATING
OTHERS TO GET WHAT
HE WANTED.



"BUT YOU ALWAYS KNEW
WHAT THE CONSEQUENCES
WERE OF HIS REQUESTS.
EVEN WHEN HE ASKED YOU
TO ACQUIRE CERTAIN
INFORMATION FROM YOUR
NEAREST COMPETITOR.



"REMEMBER HOW HE
PLAYED YOU? KNOWING
YOU WOULDN'T EVER BACK
DOWN? HE TOOK
ADVANTAGE OF THAT."

"HE KNEW EXACTLY WHAT
BUTTONS TO PUSH."

IF YOU
DON'T WANT THIS
TO FAIL-- YOU'LL
NEED TO GAIN HER
TRUST. HER COMPANY
HAS BEEN AN INDUSTRY
LEADER FOR YEARS
NOW IN SOME OF
THE AREAS WE
CAN'T QUITE
MASTER.

I ALSO
UNDERSTAND NOT
WANTING TO MIX
BUSINESS WITH THE--
PERSONAL-- RELATIONSHIP
YOU CURRENTLY HAVE
WITH MS. GEBHARD...
BUT SHE HAS WHAT
YOU NEED.

I GOT A
CALL TODAY
SAYING SOME OF
THE ECONOMIC
REFORMS BEING
PROPOSED IN SPAIN
AND ITALY STILL MIGHT
NOT HAVE ENOUGH
IMPACT TO TURN
AROUND EUROPEAN
BUSINESSES
OR THEIR
EMPLOYMENT
NUMBERS.

I'VE BEEN
HEARING THE SAME
THING. AND IT'S JUST
GOING TO CONTINUE
IMPACTING GLOBAL
GROWTH AS
WELL.

AT
LEAST
MY APPLE
STOCK IS
HOLDING
UP.

QUIT
GLOATING.
MY
PORTFOLIO'S
STILL
TANKING.

REBECCA...

CAN I
CHANGE THE
SUBJECT FOR
A MINUTE?

LOOK AT
YOU GETTING
ALL SERIOUS.
IS SOMETHING
WRONG?

NO. NOT
REALLY.

THEN
WHAT'S
ON YOUR
MIND?

I KNOW WE SAID THAT
WE'D KEEP OUR PROFESSIONAL
LIVES OUT OF OUR RELATIONSHIP
BUT... BUT I'M AT A CROSSROADS
AND YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE THAT
I THINK CAN HELP.

COME ON...
LET'S NOT DO THIS.
I'VE TOLD YOU I'M NOT
WILLING TO COMPROMISE
EITHER MY COMPANY
OR MYSELF.

NONE OF MY
PATENTS ARE FOR SALE.
I DON'T KNOW IF THINGS WILL
CHANGE IN A YEAR OR TWO,
BUT MY COMPANY HAS DECIDED
TO STICK WITH OUR OWN
INTERNAL GOALS FOR NOW.
SO, I'D LOVE TO HELP YOU
OUT, DARLING.

BUT I
CAN'T.



AND I'VE TOLD YOU HOW MUCH I RESPECT THAT... BUT MAYBE THERE'S A WAY TO LICENSE OUT OR LEASE SOME OF YOUR TECHNOLOGY FOR A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME. I'D BE WILLING TO PAY WAY ABOVE MARKET VALUE. SO YOU'D GET A PREMIUM FOR YOUR INVOLVEMENT, AND I'D LET SOME OF YOUR STAFF OVERSEE SOME OF THE APPLICATIONS OF YOUR SCIENCE.

LOOK-- I UNDERSTAND YOU'VE RUN INTO A BIT OF A ROUGH PATCH LATELY, I REALLY DO, BUT LINKING OUR COMPANIES TOGETHER-- IN ANY CAPACITY-- WON'T WORK. YOU SAY THAT MORE THAN I DO.



AND IN MOST CIRCUMSTANCES THAT EVALUATION IS RIGHT. BUT THIS IS DIFFERENT. WE'RE GETTING DOWN TO OUR LAST FEW BIO-TRANSMITTABLE SPLICES AND I KNOW YOUR CUTTING EDGE...

STOP!

YOU'RE STARTING TO RUIN WHAT HAS, SO FAR, BEEN A PRETTY ENJOYABLE EVENING. SO UNLESS YOU WANT ME TO COMPLETELY LOSE MY APPETITE... I'D SUGGEST WE CHANGE THE SUBJECT.



WHY? JUST GIVE ME ONE REASON.



IT'S THE SAME ONE I'VE ALWAYS HAD.

I DON'T *TRUST* THOSE YOU'RE WORKING WITH. ESPECIALLY WYNN.

GOT IT. I DIDN'T MEAN TO UPSET YOU. I'M SORRY.



I LOVE YOU.

I LOVE YOU TOO.

"SADLY, YOUR FEELINGS FOR HER ALWAYS WON OUT."

BULLSHIT!

KRASH

THEN WHY
DID I *KILL HER*?
I REMEMBER
THAT PART!*

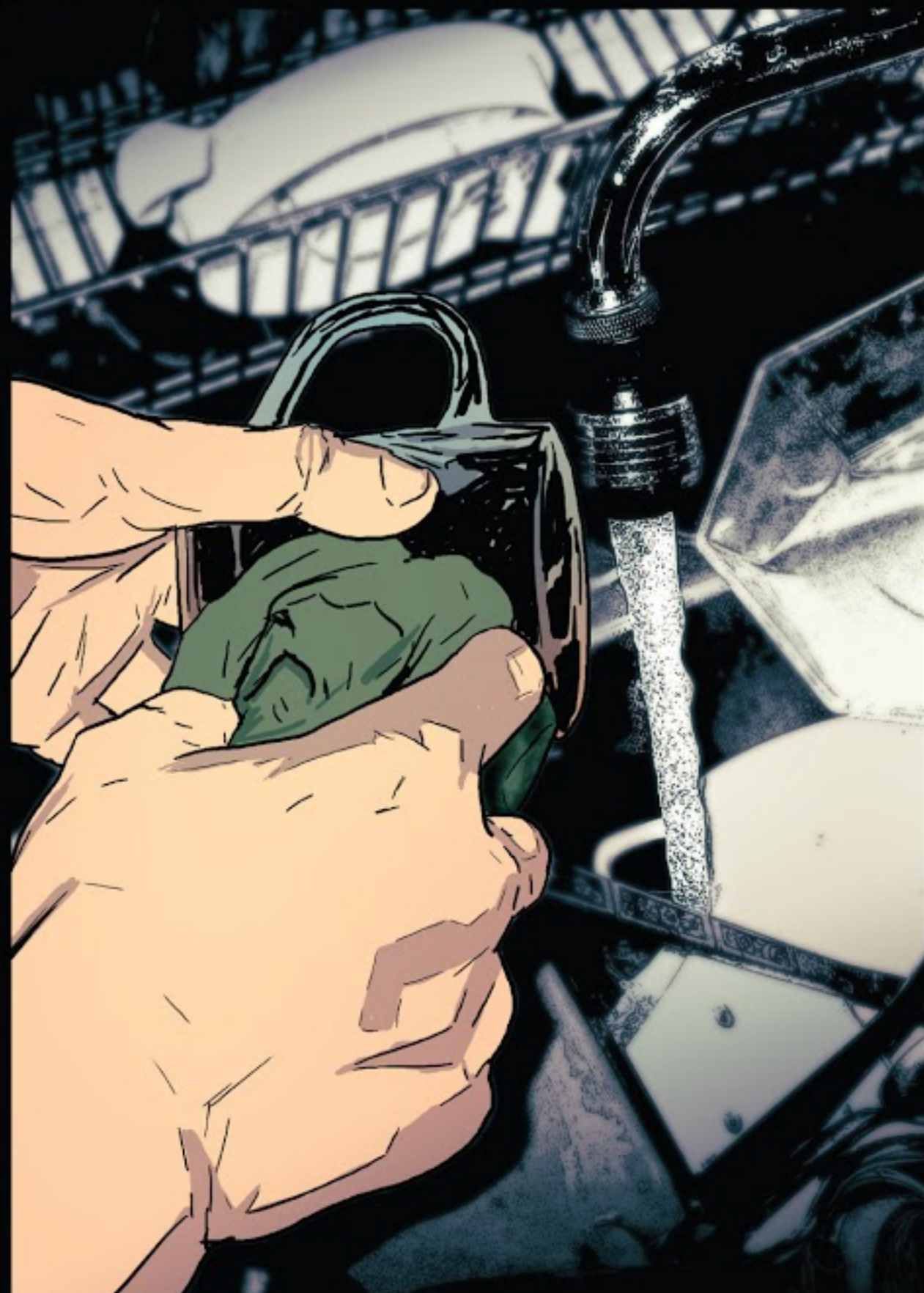
*See Flashback issue #216-- Todd

UNGGG...!

I... NEVER
SAID... YOU
DID.

TALK.

"I WAS GONE BY THEN, BUT... BUT
I HEARD THEY KEPT PUSHING YOU.
AND AS MUCH AS YOU WANTED THE
PROJECT TO SUCCEED-- THERE WERE
SOME LINES YOU WOULDN'T CROSS."





"THEY MISTAKENLY ASSUMED
YOU WOULDN'T FOREGO
EIGHT YEARS OF YOUR LIFE
FOR... A WOMAN."



"AND NO MATTER HOW
MANY TIMES YOU ASSURED
THEM YOU'D HANDLE
THINGS, OR HOW MANY
TIMES YOU DISCUSSED IT..."

"I THINK
EVENTUALLY
THEY JUST GOT
TIRED... OF
TALKING."





NEXT ISSUE:
WYNN... AT ANY COST!



A detailed comic book illustration of Spawn. At the top, Spawn's head is shown with a white mask and glowing green eyes. Below him, his large, grey, muscular body is visible, wearing a red cape and a thick yellow chain. He is surrounded by several red, spiked helmets or masks. The background is a dark, fiery orange-red.

SPAWN[®]

TRIUMPHS ON A DARK NIGHT

BY
TODD MCFARLANE
WITH
SZYMON KUDRANSKI
AND
FCO PLASCENCIA

ISSUE #224 • \$2.99



MCFARLANE
PARODY OF
MILLER + fco



"THAT WAS THE MOMENT.
THAT'S... WHEN EVERYTHING
SEEMED TO CHANGE.

"NO ONE
TRUSTED ANYONE
AFTER THAT. AND
IT ALL BEGAN TO
UNRAVEL FROM
THERE."

**GET
UP!**

YOU CAN
GRIEVE
ABOUT THIS
LATER.

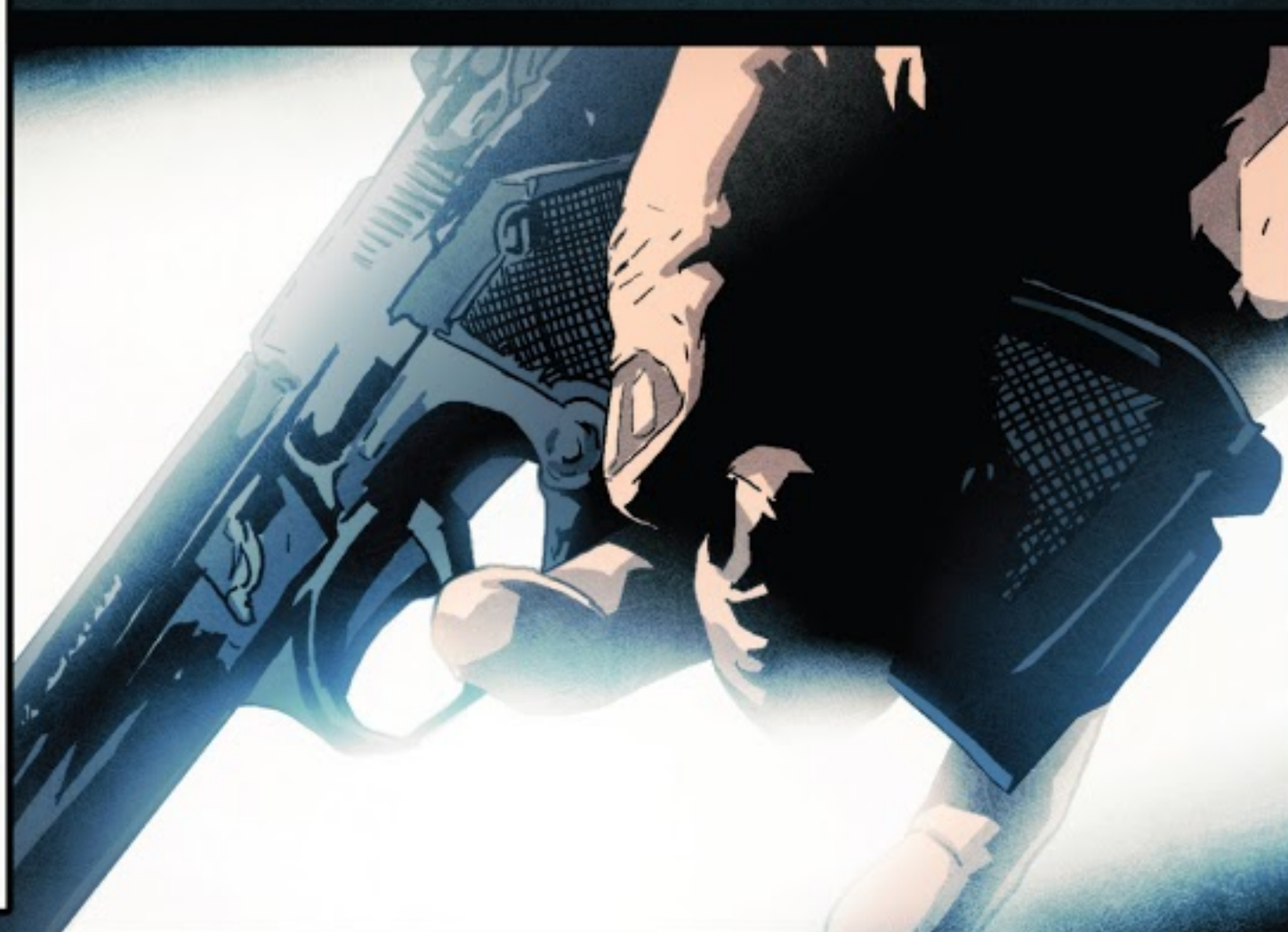


BECAUSE BEFORE WE GO-- THERE'S STILL SOMETHING YOU NEED TO DO.

MY ORDERS ARE TO NOT LEAVE HERE EMPTY HANDED.



NOW-- GET UP, KRAMER!



CHRIST-- LOOK AT YOU! YOU'RE EVEN DUMBER THAN I THOUGHT.



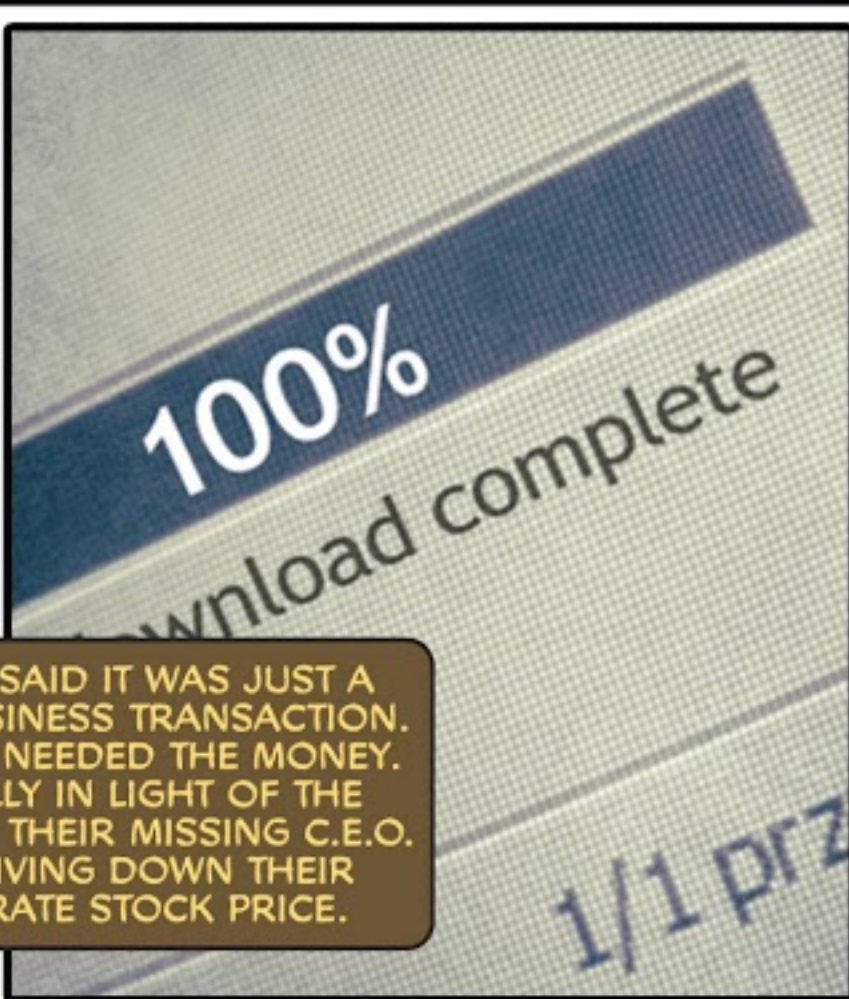
THERE WAS ONLY ONE BULLET IN THAT GUN AND NOW YOUR PRINTS ARE THE ONLY ONES ON THE MURDER WEAPON. THAT WON'T LOOK SO GOOD TO THE COPS.

SO BEFORE YOU GET ANY GRANDIOSE IDEAS ABOUT DOING SOMETHING HEROIC RIGHT NOW-- LET ME TELL YOU THAT WE KNOW WHERE YOUR ENTIRE EXTENDED FAMILY LIVES. **ALL OF THEM!** IF YOU THINK KILLING YOUR BRIDE SEEMED EASY... IMAGINE HOW QUICKLY YOUR SISTER, MOTHER, AUNTS AND UNCLES WILL DIE.

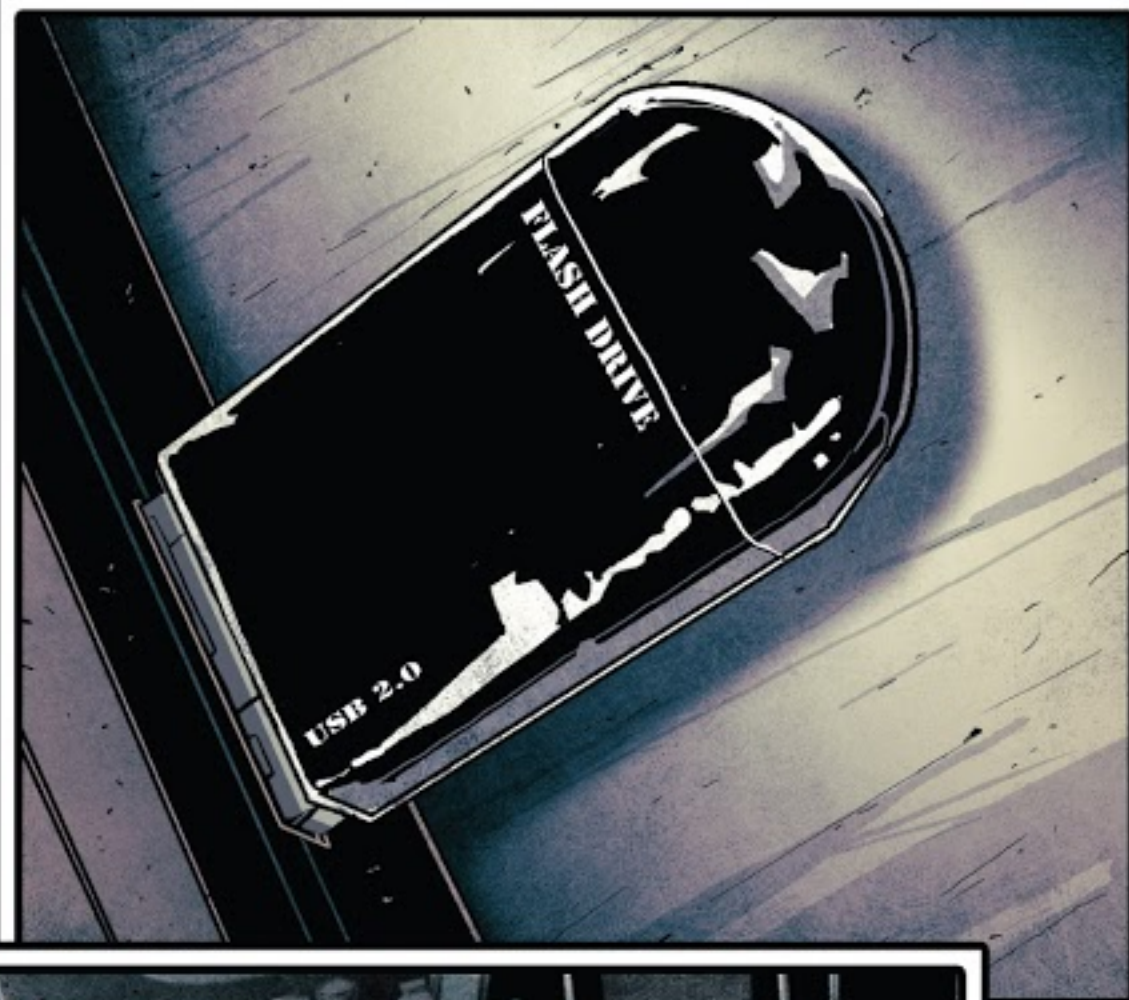
THAT IS, UNLESS WE GET WHAT WE CAME FOR. NOW GET OVER TO HER COMPUTER AND DO YOUR JOB!



"ONCE THAT TRUST WAS BROKEN IT DIDN'T MATTER HOW MUCH PROGRESS WAS MADE. EVEN AFTER 'THE PROJECT' GOT THEIR HANDS ON THEIR COMPETITOR'S PRIME PATENTS. SOME SAID IT WAS BECAUSE OF YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR RIVAL.

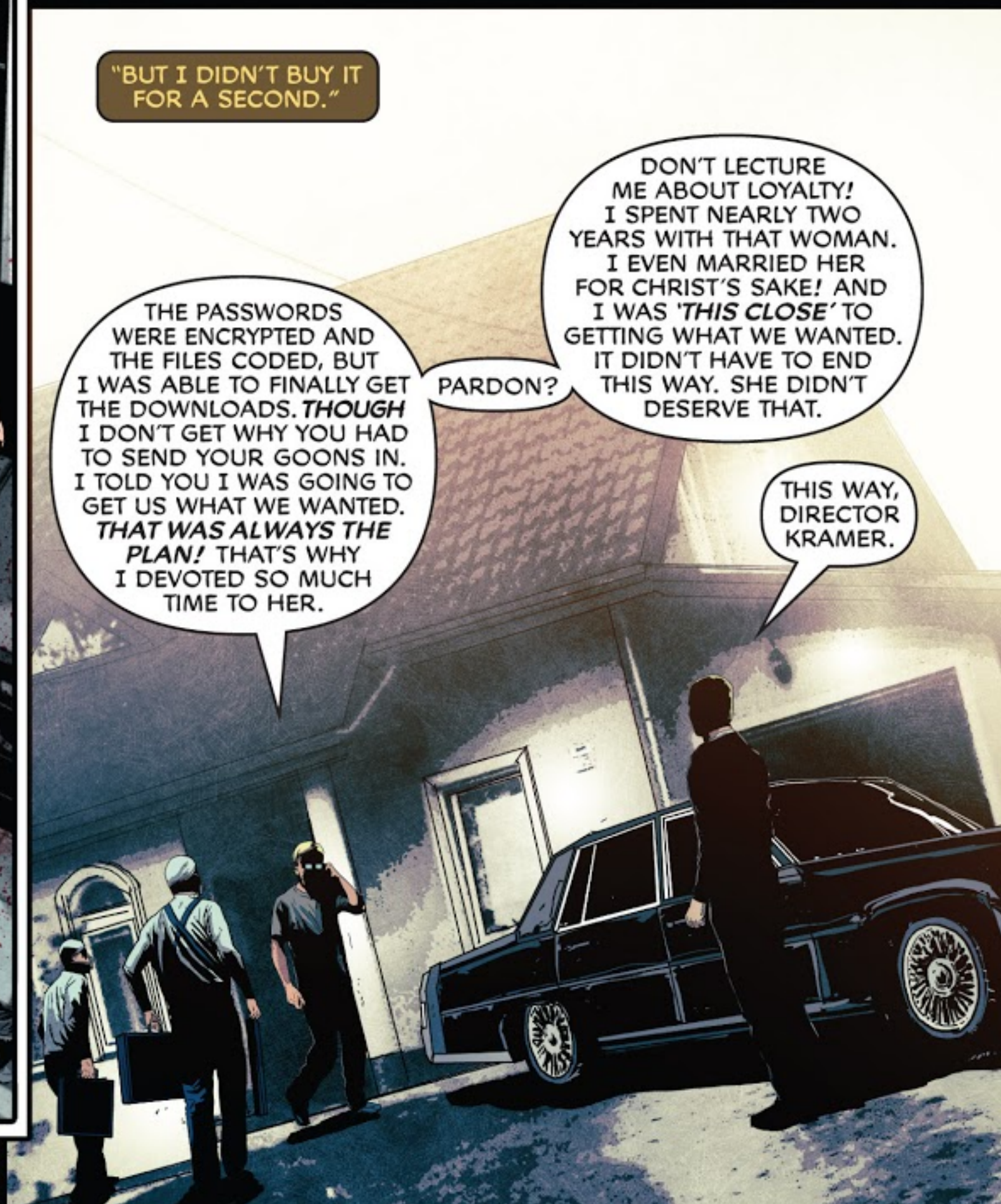


"OTHERS SAID IT WAS JUST A SIMPLE BUSINESS TRANSACTION. THAT THEY NEEDED THE MONEY. ESPECIALLY IN LIGHT OF THE NEWS THAT THEIR MISSING C.E.O. WAS DRIVING DOWN THEIR CORPORATE STOCK PRICE.



"WHATEVER THE REASON... PEOPLE TRIED PUTTING ON THE FAÇADE OF BUSINESS AS USUAL."

"I'M SORRY, WYNN, IT JUST TOOK A LITTLE LONGER THAN ANTICIPATED."



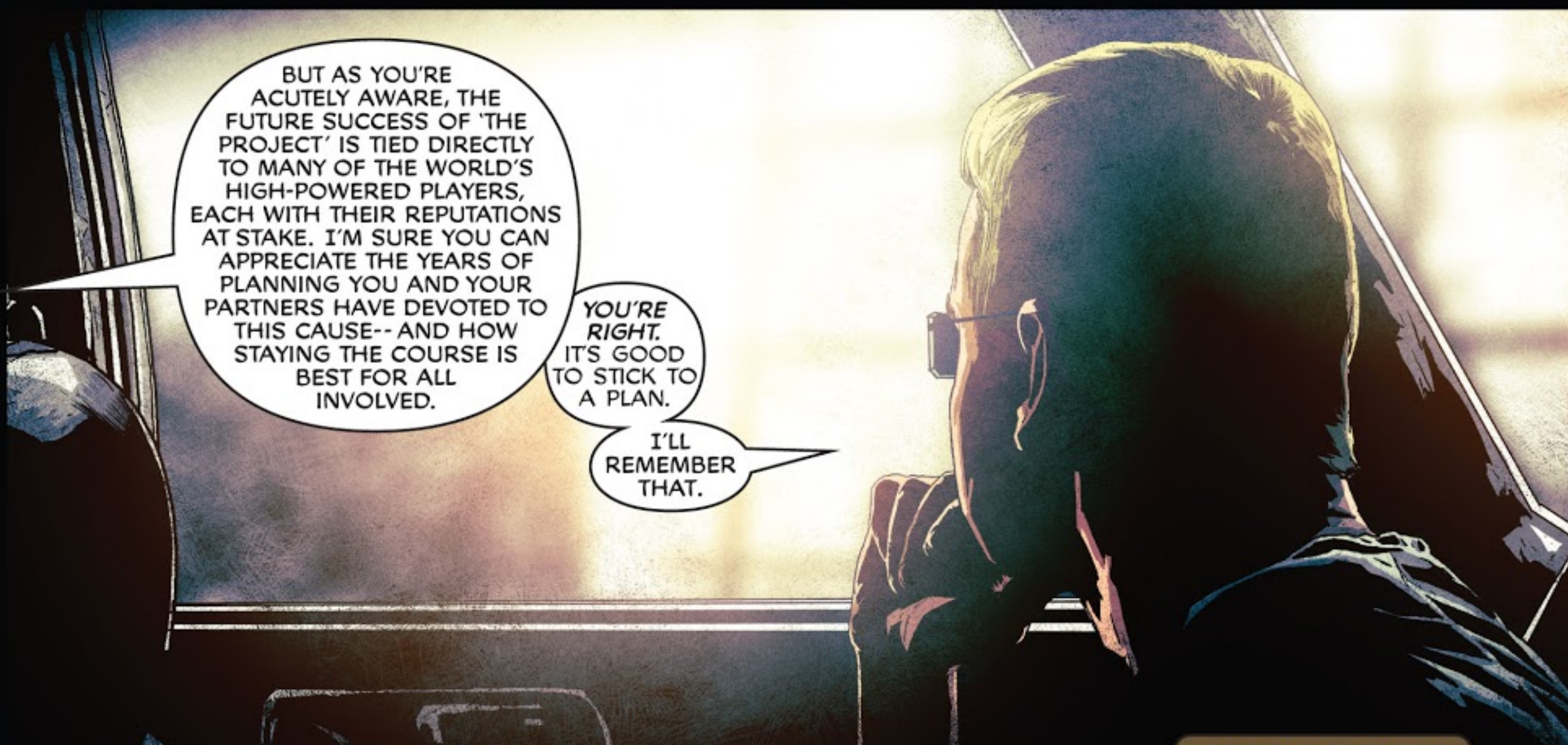
"BUT I DIDN'T BUY IT FOR A SECOND."

THE PASSWORDS WERE ENCRYPTED AND THE FILES CODED, BUT I WAS ABLE TO FINALLY GET THE DOWNLOADS. *THOUGH* I DON'T GET WHY YOU HAD TO SEND YOUR GOONS IN. I TOLD YOU I WAS GOING TO GET US WHAT WE WANTED. *THAT WAS ALWAYS THE PLAN!* THAT'S WHY I DEVOTED SO MUCH TIME TO HER.

PARDON?

DON'T LECTURE ME ABOUT LOYALTY! I SPENT NEARLY TWO YEARS WITH THAT WOMAN. I EVEN MARRIED HER FOR CHRIST'S SAKE! AND I WAS '*THIS CLOSE*' TO GETTING WHAT WE WANTED. IT DIDN'T HAVE TO END THIS WAY. SHE DIDN'T DESERVE THAT.

THIS WAY, DIRECTOR KRAMER.



"EVERYONE STARTED COVERING THEIR OWN ASSES AFTER THAT..."





LOOK...
WE'VE BOTH
BEEN FIGHTING
OUR PAST. AND
WE BOTH WANT
ANSWERS. JUST...
JUST EASE UP
A LITTLE.

WE'RE
CLOSE. VERY
CLOSE-- TO GETTING
WHAT WE WANT. I THINK
YOU SENSE IT TOO. SO
LET'S PLAY THIS THING
OUT AND TRY KEEPING
EVERYONE ALIVE
FOR NOW.

YOU THINK
YOU CAN DO
BETTER?



DON'T
KNOW.
BUT LET ME
TRY.



SYKES?

YEAH...?

POPK



I HAVEN'T
GOTTEN MY
QUESTION
ANSWERED,
EITHER!

WHY WAS
I SELECTED?
WHAT MADE
ME SO DAMN
SPECIAL?



YOU WERE JUST A HIGH LEVEL MATCH IN ONE OF OUR MULTIPLE GENETIC CATEGORIES. WE WEREN'T **LOOKING** FOR THE PERFECT HUMAN BEING-- WE WERE TRYING TO CREATE IT!

BUT WE KNEW THAT WOULD REQUIRE DOZENS AND DOZENS OF PATIENTS. AND, IN HINDSIGHT, THAT WAS PROBABLY OUR BIGGEST MISTAKE.

THINK ABOUT THE NUMBER OF POSSIBILITIES FOR HUMAN AUGMENTATION. HEARING. SIGHT. THE NERVOUS SYSTEM. BRAIN PATTERNS. SKIN DENSITY. I COULD GO ON FOR TWENTY MINUTES WITH A LIST THAT BREAKS DOWN THE MALE ANATOMY INTO A HUNDRED SCIENTIFIC AREAS.

YOU WEREN'T.

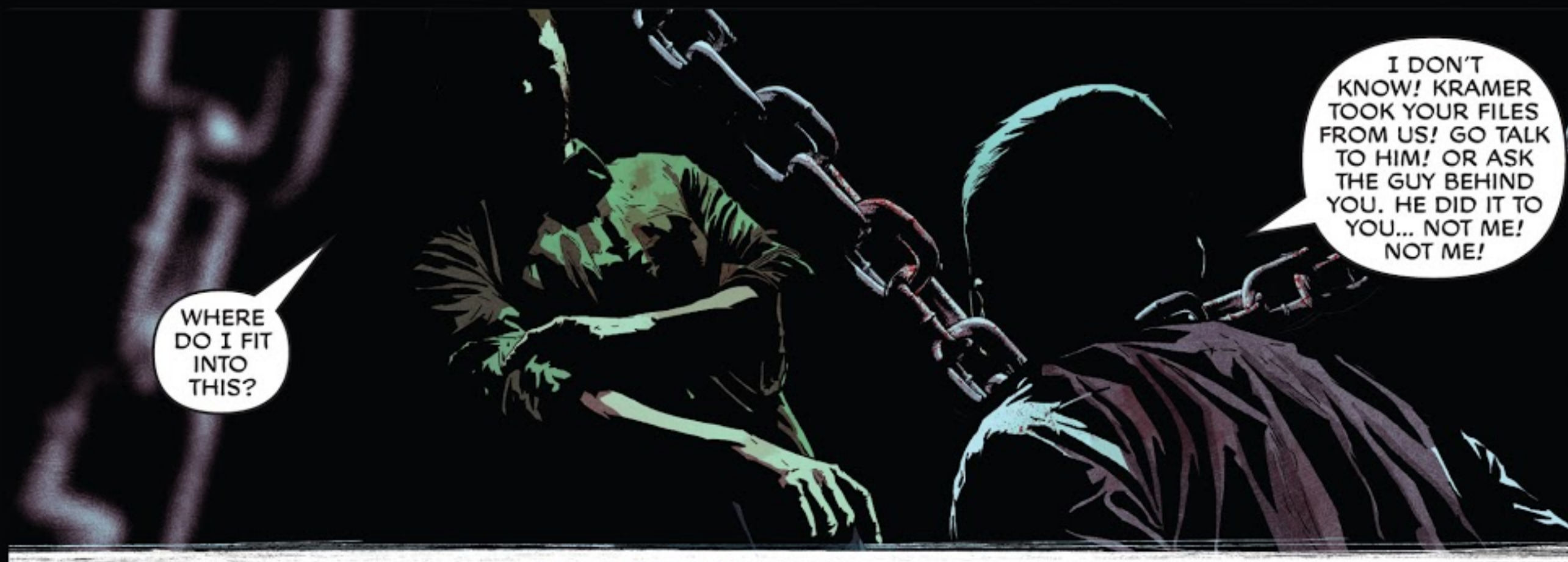
THE PROBLEM WAS THAT EACH OF THEM NEEDED SPECIALISTS AND A WHOLE NEW SET OF EXPERIMENTS THAT WERE TAILORED TO THAT PARTICULAR SECTION OF THE BODY. SO NOW, ASK YOURSELF THIS QUESTION: "HOW DO YOU KEEP EVERY ONE OF THOSE CAREER CLIMBING DOCTORS AND THEIR STAFF HAPPY?" GIVEN THAT THEY ALL WANTED TO BE THE FIRST ONES TO UNLOCK ONE OF THE GENE CODES FOR MANIPULATION!

AND BEFORE YOU HURT YOURSELF THINKING ABOUT IT-- I'LL GIVE YOU THE ANSWER. **YOU DON'T! IT'S IMPOSSIBLE!**

EVERYONE WAS SERVING THEIR OWN AGENDAS! AND SO THE ELUSIVE 'PERFECTION' THEY WERE CHASING JUST BECAME MORE AND MORE F**KED UP!

AND WHEN KRAMER OR WYNN-- OR WHOEVER WAS PULLING THE STRINGS-- TRIED TO PUT SOME OF THE SEPARATE EXPERIMENTS TOGETHER... WELL, THAT'S WHEN WE STARTED BACKSLIDING. THERE WAS NO FOCUS, NO SINGULAR VISION TO WHAT WE WERE DOING, AND SO INSTEAD OF CREATING PERFECTION WE BEGAN CREATING **FRANKENSTEINS!**

WE WERE OVER-THINKING EVERYTHING. OVER-KILLING THE ENTIRE PROCESS. HELL, THEY EVEN GAVE THAT NICKNAME TO ONE OF THE PATIENTS, I THINK.



WHERE DO I FIT INTO THIS?

I DON'T KNOW! KRAMER TOOK YOUR FILES FROM US! GO TALK TO HIM! OR ASK THE GUY BEHIND YOU. HE DID IT TO YOU... NOT ME! NOT ME!



I WASN'T ANYWHERE NEAR THE PLACE WHEN THEY 'ACQUIRED' YOU.*



*See Issue 216 -- Todd.



YOU WANT TO KILL ME...? GO AHEAD.

BUT IT WON'T BE BECAUSE OF WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU. MY HANDS ARE CLEAN ON THAT ONE.

YOU HEAR ME, BASTARDS! I'M... CLEAN... ON THAT ONE.

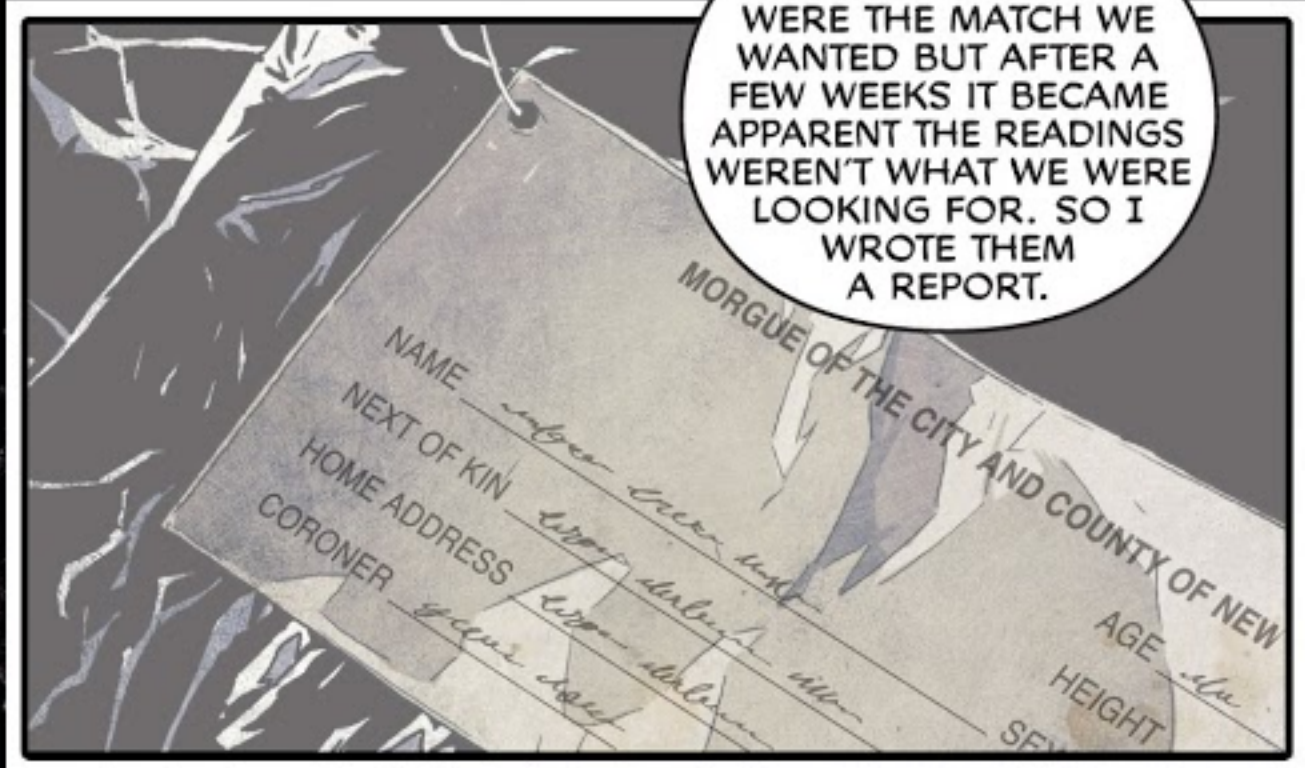


THEY WOULDN'T LISTEN. EVEN WHEN I TRIED TO WARN THEM.

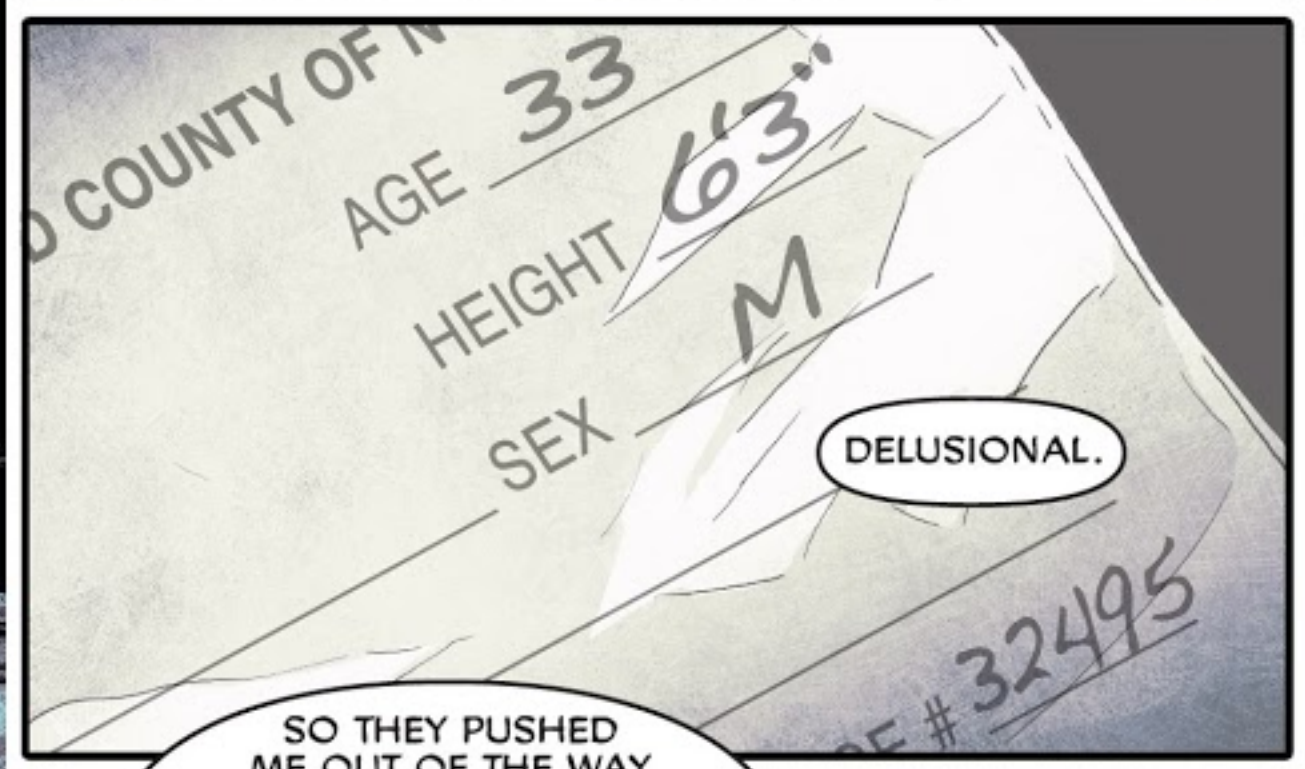
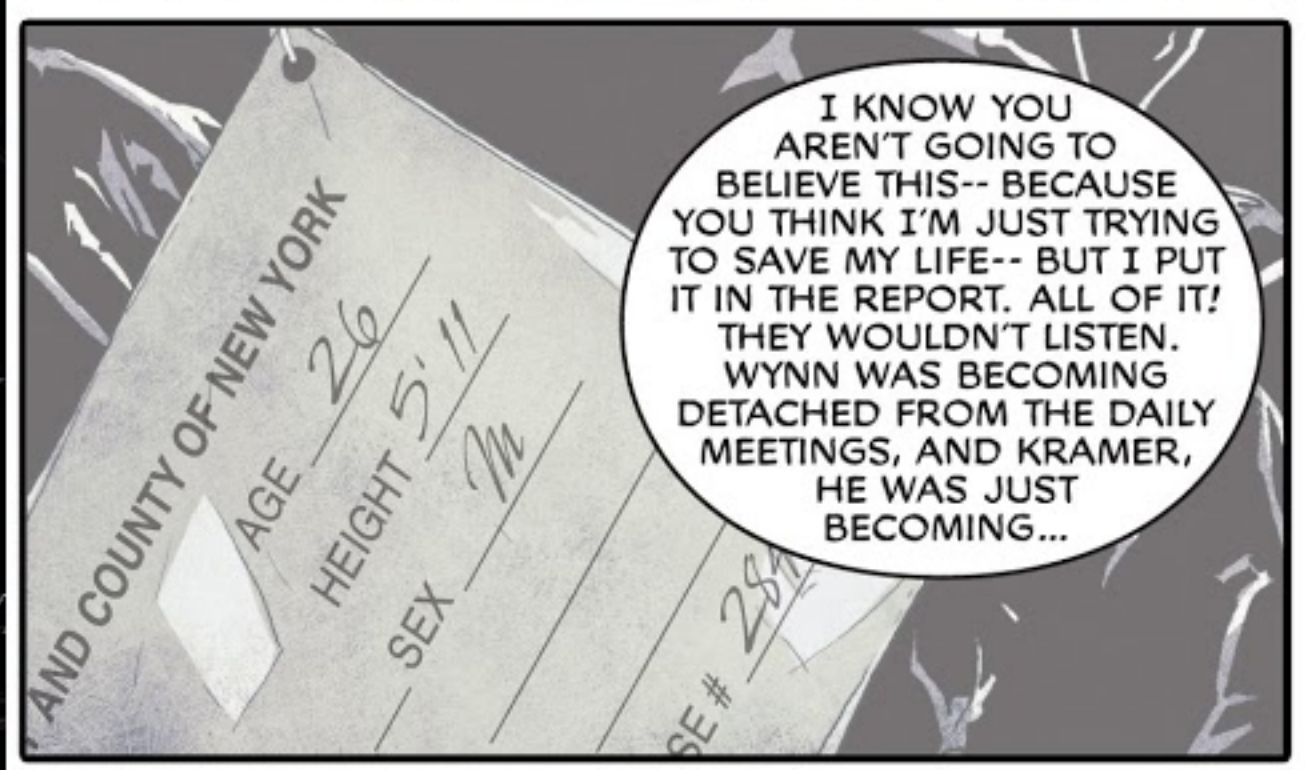
ABOUT WHAT?

ABOUT YOU.

YES... AT FIRST WE THOUGHT YOU WERE THE MATCH WE WANTED BUT AFTER A FEW WEEKS IT BECAME APPARENT THE READINGS WEREN'T WHAT WE WERE LOOKING FOR. SO I WROTE THEM A REPORT.



I KNOW YOU AREN'T GOING TO BELIEVE THIS-- BECAUSE YOU THINK I'M JUST TRYING TO SAVE MY LIFE-- BUT I PUT IT IN THE REPORT. ALL OF IT! THEY WOULDN'T LISTEN. WYNN WAS BECOMING DETACHED FROM THE DAILY MEETINGS, AND KRAMER, HE WAS JUST BECOMING...



DELUSIONAL.

SO THEY PUSHED ME OUT OF THE WAY AND WENT FORWARD. I ONLY HEARD ABOUT SOME OF THE SHIT THAT WENT ON AFTER THAT. CONSIDER YOURSELF LUCKY, RICHARD, MOST PATIENTS DIDN'T MAKE IT OUT OF THE LABS BREATHING.

AND BECAUSE OF FREAKS LIKE YOU-- THEY CONTINUED TO DELUDE THEMSELVES, THINKING THEY'D SOMEHOW TAKEN THEIR WORK TO THE NEXT LEVEL. BUT THE PATIENTS WERE DEFECTIVE...





THEY
WERE ALL
DEFECTIVE.

AND I
SHOULD
KNOW
BECAUSE
I'VE HIRED
MOST OF
THEM.*

BUT THAT
GLIMMER
OF FALSE
SUCCESS WAS
ENOUGH TO
KEEP THE
EXPERIMENTS
GOING. UNTIL
WYNN SHUT
IT ALL
DOWN.

*Issues 186
through 198--Todd



SURELY, KRAMER,
YOU CAN UNDERSTAND
THEIR POSITION. NONE
OF THEM ARE WILLING TO
COMPROMISE THEMSELVES
OR THEIR MONEY ANY
FURTHER.

ACTING
FOOLISHLY
WON'T
CHANGE
ANYTHING.

NO!
WE'RE
TOO CLOSE!
I JUST **NEED**
ONE MORE AND
THIS TIME IT'LL
WORK. YOU
GO TELL
THEM!

THIS
TIME IT'LL
WORK!



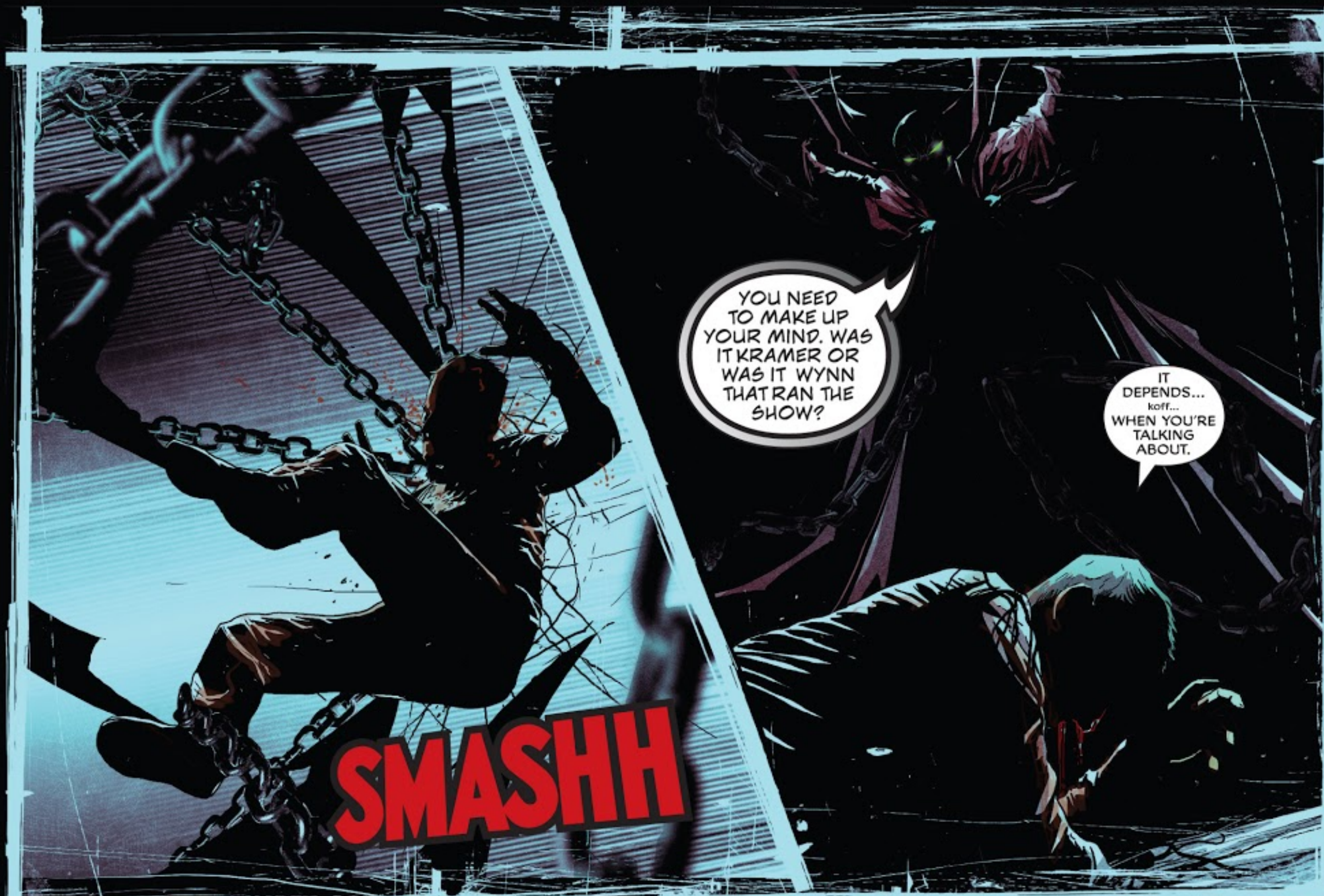
PATIENT 46
WAS THE LAST OF THEM.
AND TO KRAMER'S CREDIT--
46 WAS AUGMENTED MORE
THAN THE OTHERS AND HAD
THE LEAST AMOUNT OF
MENTAL INSTABILITY.



SO MAYBE
IN TIME THEY
MIGHT HAVE
SUCCEEDED.

BUT WHEN
JASON WYNN
WANTS SOMETHING
TO GO AWAY. IT
JUST VANISHES.





YOU NEED
TO MAKE UP
YOUR MIND. WAS
IT KRAMER OR
WAS IT WYNN
THAT RAN THE
SHOW?

IT
DEPENDS...
koff...
WHEN YOU'RE
TALKING
ABOUT.

SMASHH



NEAR
THE END.
WHO WAS
GIVING THE
ORDERS
THEN?



KRAMER WAS--
FOR THE MOST PART.
BUT WHEN HE BECAME
UNHINGED, THEY SAID
WYNN AND HIS GROUP
ASSERTED THEMSELVES.
AND A POWER PLAY
BROKE OUT.



THAT'S WHEN
WYNN CALLED IN
SOME OF HIS OUTSIDE
CONTACTS TO TIP THE
SCALES IN HIS DIRECTION.
HE TRIED TO SMOTHER
KRAMER SLOWLY, LIKE
HE DID TO THE REST
OF US... **UNGH!**

SNIKKKT

SNIKKKT



SO NONE OF THIS IS YOUR FAULT?

AND YOUR REPORTS TRIED TO HELP THE PATIENTS?

NO!

THAT'S WHAT I'VE BEEN SAYING!



THEN ASK HIM WHY HE TRIED TO HIRE ME AFTER I ESCAPED.



YOU HEARD THE MAN...



AAAAAYYYYYY



WHY'D YOU TRY AND HIRE HIM?



I WAS TRYING TO HELP THEM!

IS THAT SO?

EXPLOITING THE 'DEFECTIVE' PATIENTS INTO A LIFE OF CRIME WAS YOUR WAY OF HELPING? IS THAT WHAT YOU'RE TELLING ME?



NO... THEY... I DIDN'T HAVE A CHOICE.

THERE'S ALWAYS A CHOICE! EVERY TIME WE MOVE, OR ACT, OR SPEAK--WE MAKE THOSE DECISIONS OURSELVES. SADLY, MOST OF US WANT TO BLAME OUR OWN ACTIONS ON OTHERS. THE ONLY THING OTHER PEOPLE CAN DO IS BE **CATALYSTS**--AND WE ALL GET TO ACT ACCORDINGLY. SO DON'T YOU DARE LOOK AT ME AND SAY WITH A STRAIGHT FACE THAT SOMEONE ELSE FORCED YOU TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THOSE PATIENTS **AGAINST YOUR WILL!**



YOU WERE THE ONE THAT SENT THOSE VILLAINS AFTER TO ME. * YOU WERE THE ONE THAT GAVE THEM THEIR ORDERS! YOU WERE THE ONE THAT TOLD THEM TO **KILL ME!**



SO DON'T TELL ME YOU'RE **INNOCENT!**



*Issue 187--Todd



*Issue 198--Todd



DON'T TELL
ME YOUR
HANDS ARE
CLEAN!

SPAWN!
YOU'RE
KILLING
HIM!



SKRITCH
SKRITCH



NOT
QUITE.

I JUST
WANT HIM
TO FEEL WHAT
IT'S LIKE WHEN
SOMEONE
WANTS YOU
DEAD.



SPAWN...

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO HERE? I DON'T THINK WE'RE GETTING MUCH MORE FROM HIM.

I DIDN'T ASK YOUR OPINION.

WHATEVER!

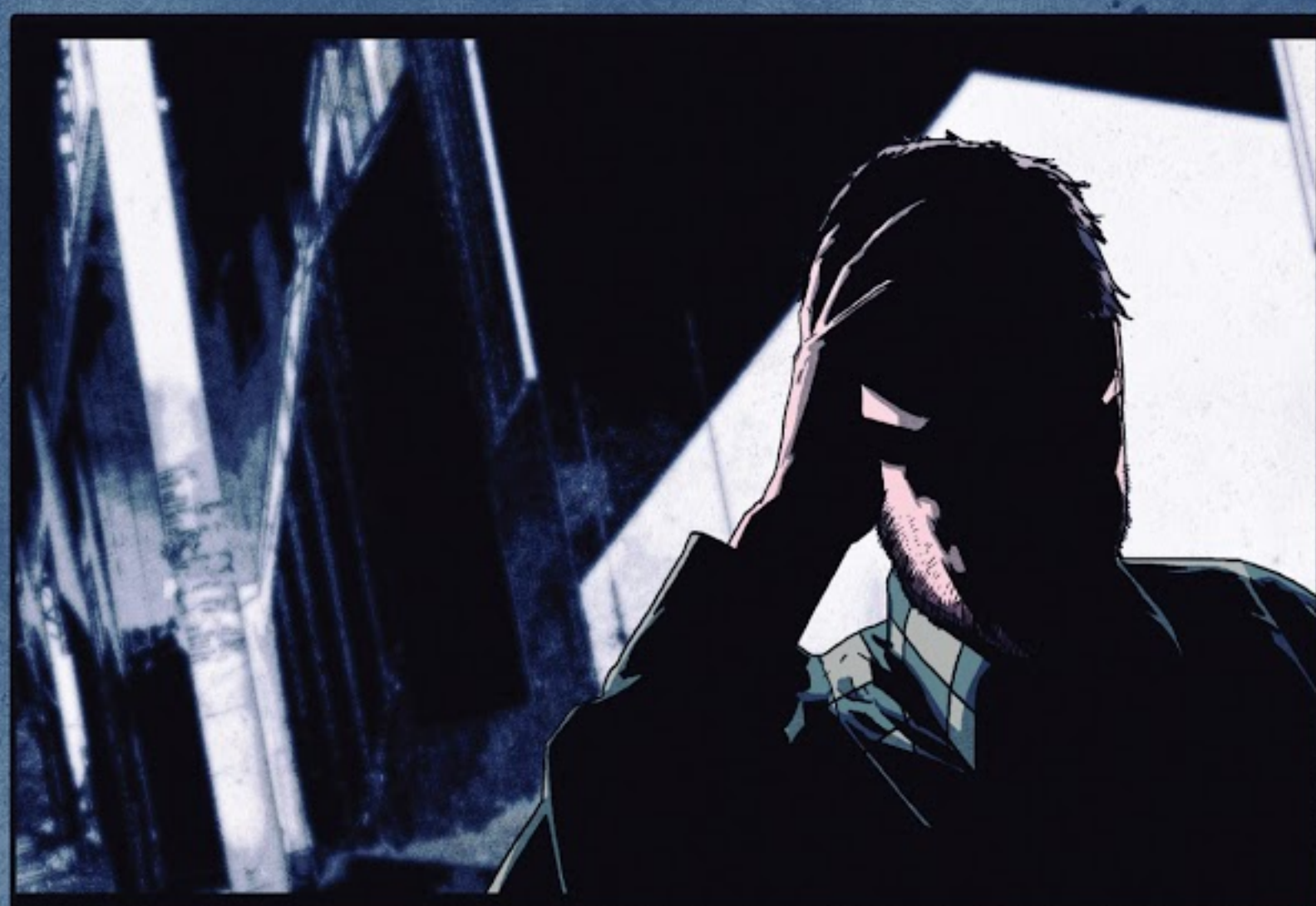
IT'S YOUR SHOW, BUD. YOU DO WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO. I'M DONE WITH THIS.

RICHARD...

...I'M SORRY.

GOOD LUCK, SYKES.

IT'S WAY TOO LATE FOR THAT.



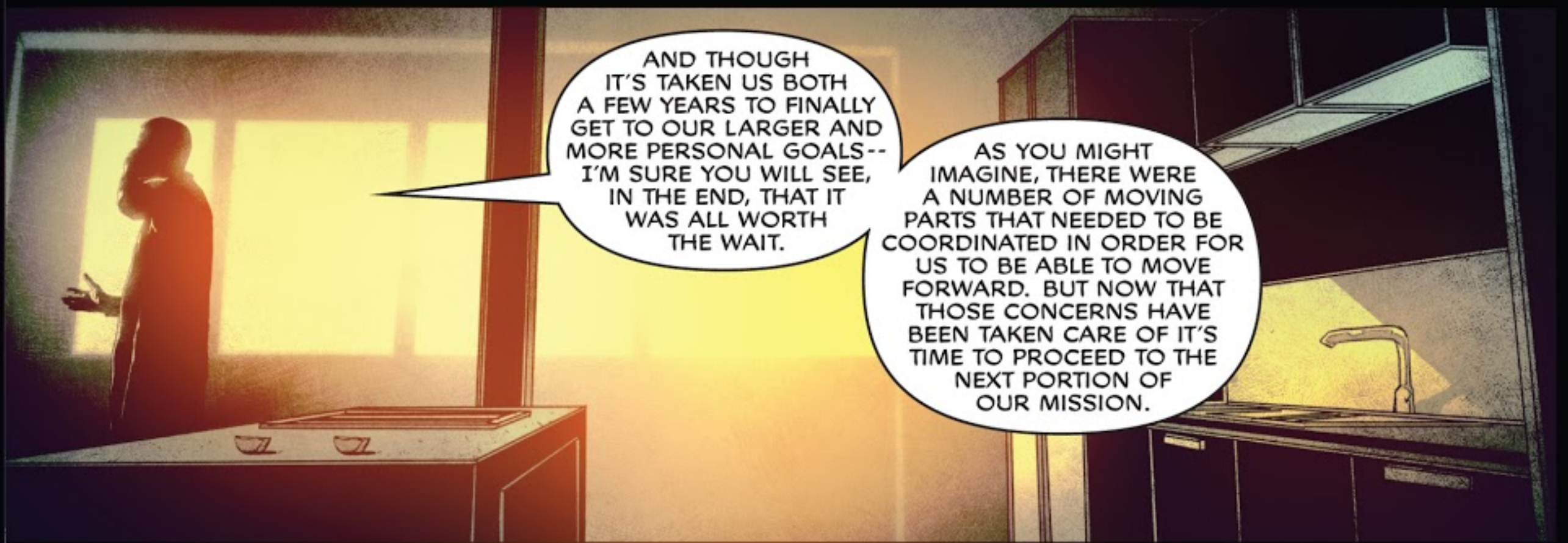
IT LOOKS
LIKE SYKES
WILL BE OFF
THE BOARD
SOON.

JUST
LIKE YOU
WANTED.





THAT'S
EXCELLENT,
RICHARD. YOU SHOULD
BE COMMENDED ON
THE WONDERFUL JOB
YOU'VE BEEN
DOING.



AND THOUGH
IT'S TAKEN US BOTH
A FEW YEARS TO FINALLY
GET TO OUR LARGER AND
MORE PERSONAL GOALS--
I'M SURE YOU WILL SEE,
IN THE END, THAT IT
WAS ALL WORTH
THE WAIT.

AS YOU MIGHT
IMAGINE, THERE WERE
A NUMBER OF MOVING
PARTS THAT NEEDED TO BE
COORDINATED IN ORDER FOR
US TO BE ABLE TO MOVE
FORWARD. BUT NOW THAT
THOSE CONCERNS HAVE
BEEN TAKEN CARE OF IT'S
TIME TO PROCEED TO THE
NEXT PORTION OF
OUR MISSION.



WHICH
BRINGS ME
TO THE
OBVIOUS NEXT
QUESTION.



IS OUR
TARGET
READY?

I BELIEVE
SO.



ONCE HE FINISHES HIS CURRENT BUSINESS I'LL GENTLY PERSUADE HIM ABOUT WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE NEXT.

HOW DIFFICULT WILL THAT BE?

NOT VERY. SYKES DID A GREAT JOB OF GIVING JUST ENOUGH INFO WITHOUT BEING TOO DETAILED.

AND SO FAR THE TARGET DOESN'T SUSPECT ANYTHING?

NOT AS FAR AS I CAN TELL.

GOOD, THOUGH IT'S A PITY I CAN'T BE THERE TO SEE SYKES TRY AND WEASEL HIS WAY OUT OF A NO WIN PROPOSITION. THE ENTERTAINMENT VALUE OF THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN PRICELESS.

I'LL GIVE YOU THE DETAILS LATER.

PLEASE DO. IN THE MEANTIME... WHEN WILL I BE SEEING THE TWO OF YOU?

EXPECT US TO HEAD YOUR WAY THE MOMENT I UTTER THE 'MAGIC WORDS'...

"... SPAWN--
I KNOW WHERE
**JASON
WYNN**
IS AT!"

NEXT ISSUE:
THE **SHOWDOWN**



SPAWN

No. 225 DIGITAL EDITION



TM

SPAWN



NOVEMBER 2012

ELECTION 2012



THE PROLOGUE:

17 DAYS EARLIER.

YOU'RE
A FOOL,
DOWNING...!

DOWNING'S
GONE,
MALEBOLGIA.
I SENT HIM
AWAY!

IT'S JUST
ME NOW... YOUR
SYMBIOTE! AND
SINCE I WAS THE ONE
THAT PUT YOUR EVIL
INSIDE FREAK'S
BODY--I CAN **TEAR**
IT BACK OUT!

LIKE
THIS!

I SENT
FREAK TO HELL! NOT
YOU!! **THAT MAKES ME HIS
MASTER!!** YOUR MISTAKE
WASN'T FINDING OUT WHY HIS
SOUL WAS SENT THERE BEFORE
USING IT! BUT TONIGHT IT ENDS!!
THIS ALL ENDS!!

YOU
AREN'T
GOING TO
RULE THIS
WORLD!

AND
NEITHER IS
CLOWN!

JIM
DOWNING'S
JUST A
MEANS TO
GET THERE.

HEEHEE... THAT'S
FUNNY... YOU CAN'T HURT
ANY OF US. NOT ME.
NOT GOD... AND ESPECIALLY
NOT DOWNING. BECAUSE
IF YOU DO... HE'LL
COME BACK.

SIMMONS
WILL COME BACK
LOOKING FOR YOU...

HAHAHAHeehaheee



THEN LET HIM COME!



LET 'EM ALL COME!! BECAUSE NO ONE IS GOING TO STOP THIS SPAWN EVER AGAIN!*

* See issues 218 and 219 for the full story--TODD.



Minutes later.



SORRY I HAD TO BAIL ON YOU, DOWNING. I NEEDED TO GET SOMETHING IMPORTANT.



SOME-THING MALEBOLGIA NEEDS BADLY.





unh?

WHERE'D
THEY...
GO...?

ARE YOU
KIDDING
ME?



HAHAHA



DUK



ARE YOU
KIDDING
ME?!!



HAHEEHEEHAHAHAHAHAHA



ALL THOSE
YEARS OF HIDING.
OF PLANNING-- BECAUSE
I THOUGHT WHEN YOU
FINALLY RETURNED NONE
OF US WOULD BE SAFE!
THAT YOUR WRATH
AND ANGER WOULD
FIND US ALL!

BUT THIS?
I MEAN... I KNEW
YOU'D SCATTERED
YOUR POWERS-- BUT
I HAD NO IDEA HOW
WEAKENED YOU MUST
HAVE ACTUALLY BEEN
IN THAT BODY!

OBVIOUSLY
NEITHER DID
YOU.



AND TO
THINK THE YEARS I
WASTED-- BECAUSE
I WAS AFRAID
OF YOU.

PATHETIC.

ABSOLUTELY
PATHETIC!

CLOWN...

IT'S BEEN
A LONG TIME,
HASN'T IT?

COG?!

NO WAY!
YOU'RE NOT REAL...
THERE'S NO WAY YOU'RE
INVOLVED IN ALL THIS, TOO!
SOMEONE'S JUST MESSING
WITH ME NOW.

SORRY TO
DISAPPOINT
YOU-- BUT
IT'S ME.

AND I'VE
SEEN YOU'VE
INTRODUCED YOURSELF
TO THIS LATEST SPAWN.
HOPING HE'D-- **WHAT?**
FALL FOR YOUR TRICKS?
OR THAT HE'D JOIN
FORCES WITH YOU
EVENTUALLY?

THAT'S NOT
GOING TO
HAPPEN!

BECAUSE
HE'S NOT
YOURS TO
CONTROL!

NOT A
WEAPON THAT
POWERFUL.

SCREW
YOU, COG! I'VE
WAITED TOO
LONG FOR
THIS!

SO
HAVE
I!!

IF YOU THINK
THINGS JUST GOT EASIER
FOR YOU BECAUSE
MALEBOLGIA'S DISAPPEARED
-- *THINK TWICE!* AND STOP
DELUDING YOURSELF INTO
THINKING YOU'LL EVER BE
ANYTHING *OTHER THAN* THE
SECOND RATE SERVANT
YOU ALREADY ARE!

SO HERE'S
A FRIENDLY
WARNING...

STARTING
NOW-- YOU'RE NOT
GOING TO CONTACT
DOWNING AGAIN. IS
THAT CLEAR?

GET YOUR
HANDS OFF
ME, OLD
MAN!

SEE-- I'VE
GOT NEWS FOR
YOU. I DON'T KNOW
WHERE YOU'VE BEEN
HIDING-- BUT YOU'VE
BEEN GONE TOO
LONG... BECAUSE
THINGS HAVE
CHANGED!

SO
HAVE I,
CLOWN... SO
HAVE I.

Chapter One: The REMAINS

SUPPOSEDLY...
THIS IS WHERE IT
STARTED. AT LEAST
THAT'S WHAT I WAS
TOLD BY THOSE I WAS
'QUESTIONING'. AND
THEY WEREN'T IN ANY
POSITION TO BE LYING
TO ME.

WHAT ARE
YOU SAYING--
THAT THIS IS 'THE
PROJECT'?

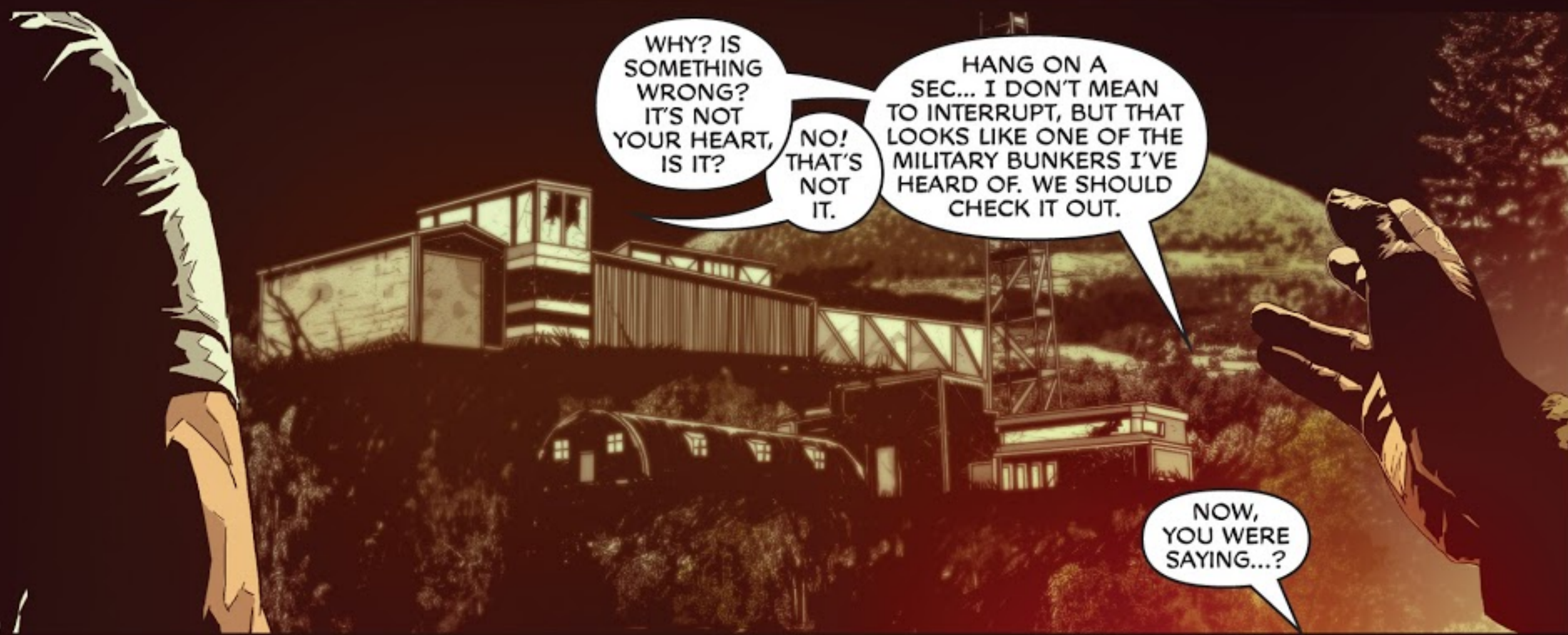
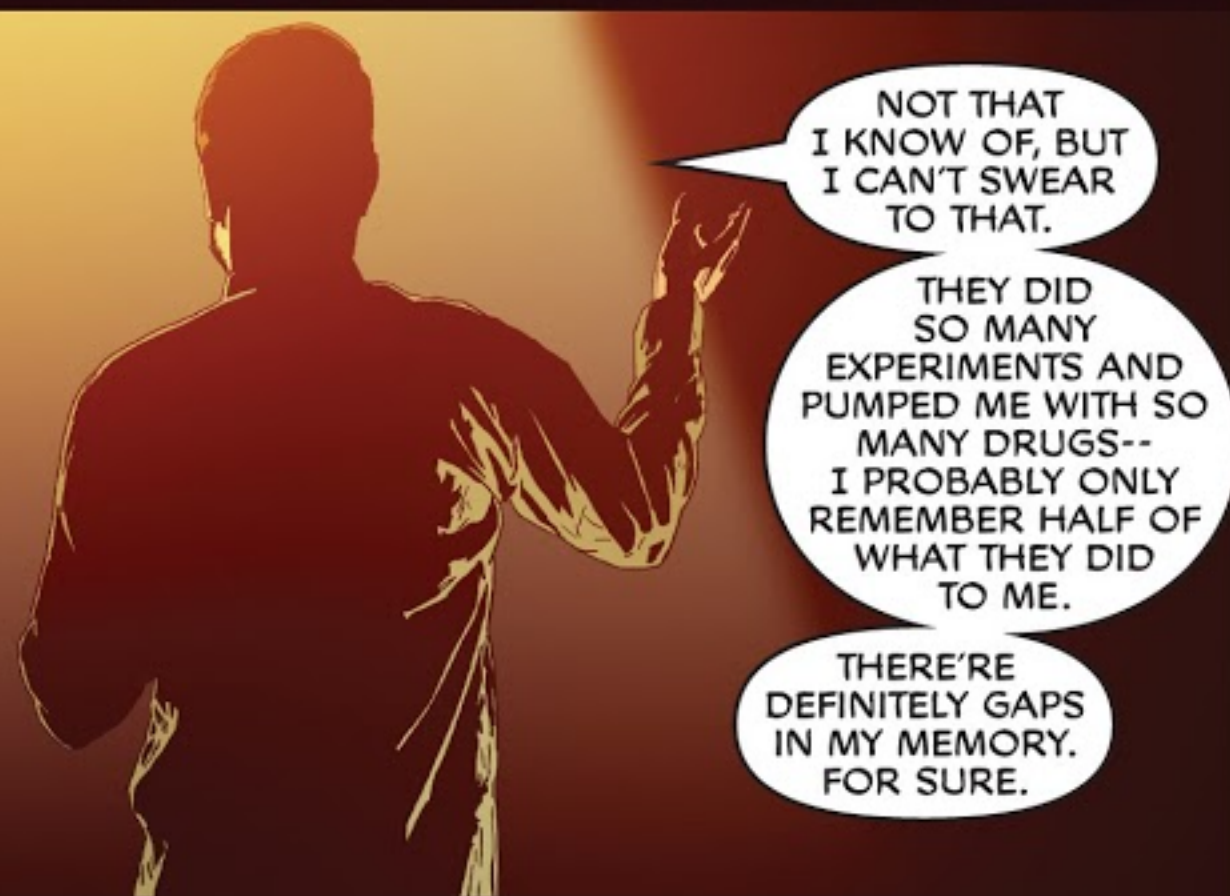
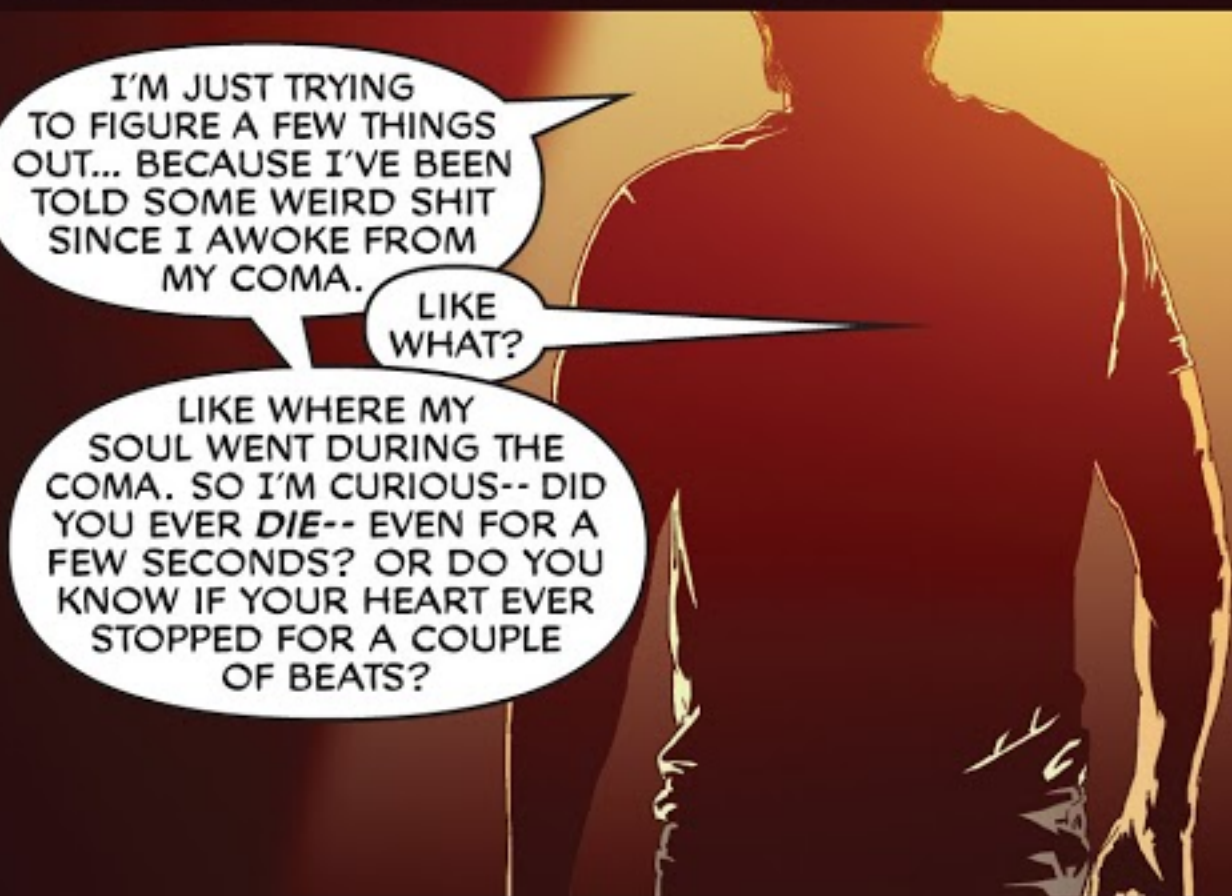
I'M NOT.
NO.

THIS WAS JUST
THE PETRI DISH WHERE
THINGS GREW OUT OF. A
HUGE LAB BUILT ON TOP OF AN
OLD MILITARY INSTALLATION
WHERE THEY COULD MONITOR
THE RESULTS OF SOME OF THEIR
'TESTS' BY SEEING HOW THE
PATIENTS WOULD LIVE AND
REACT IN A NORMAL
ENVIRONMENT.

THIS WAS JUST
AN EXTENSION OF THEIR
SICK WARFARE RESEARCH
THAT EVENTUALLY GAVE
SOMEONE THE IDEA THAT
HUMANS COULD NOT
ONLY BE CULTIVATED
AND PERFECTED...

BUT
BUILT.

ARE YOU
RELIGIOUS,
RICHARD?





HUGE,
GLOWING BLUE
WINGS! AND THE
POWER IT GAVE ME WAS...
UNBELIEVABLE! WHICH
CONSIDERING WHAT I
CAN DO AS SPAWN--
IMAGINE WHAT THAT
FELT LIKE!



I...
DON'T
KNOW WHAT
TO SAY.

IS IT
POSSIBLE?
I GUESS. AT THIS
POINT NOTHING
WOULD SURPRISE ME.
BUT IF YOU'RE ASKING
IF I KNEW OF ANY
'RESURRECTIONS'?
THE ANSWER'S
NO.



BUT GIVEN WHAT
I'VE SEEN YOUR POWER
DO ON TV-- YOU SOMEHOW
BEING **'TOUCHED BY GOD'**
WOULDN'T COME AS A
GREAT SHOCK. THE MEDIA'S
ALREADY CALLING
YOU A MESSIAH.

SO-- YOU
TELL ME YOU
THINK YOU'VE BEEN
TO HEAVEN-- THAT
SOUNDS A WHOLE
LOT BETTER THAN
THE HELL I WAS
LIVING HERE ON
EARTH!



I WASN'T
TOLD I WAS
WANTED THERE...
THEY SAID I TRIED
TO **KILL** GOD!

WHAT
THE HELL
DOES THAT
MEAN?

AND EVEN
MORE
BIZARRE-- AS
FAR AS I KNOW
I'M NOT EVEN
RELIGIOUS.



JIM...
I WISH I
COULD HELP
YOU WITH
THAT. I
CAN'T.

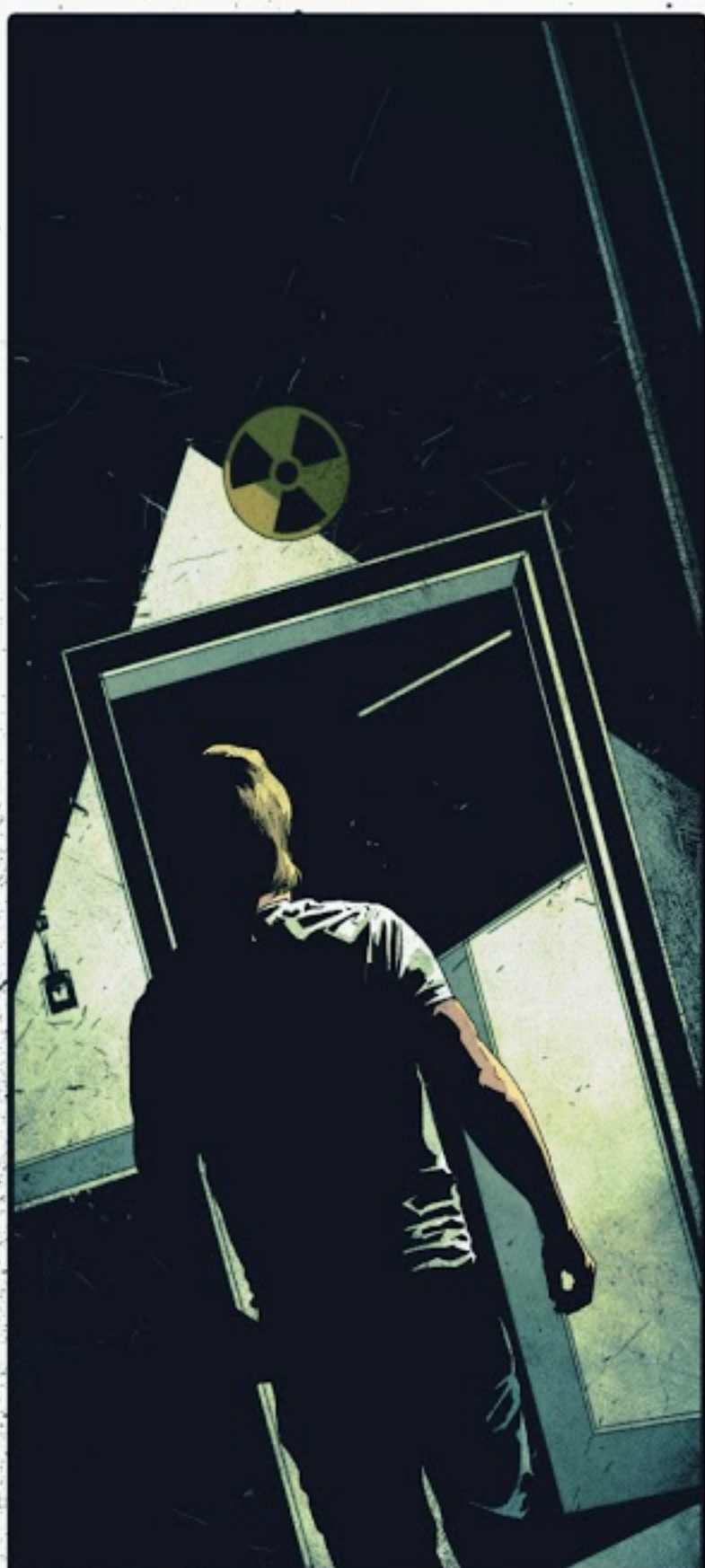
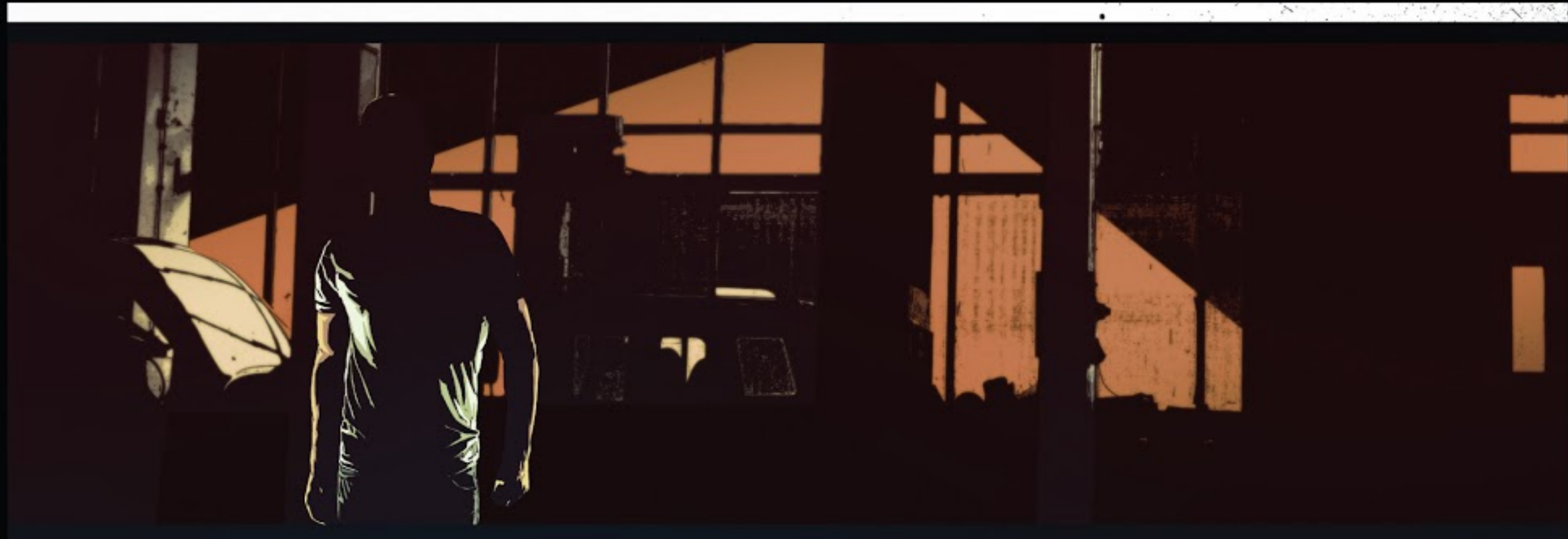


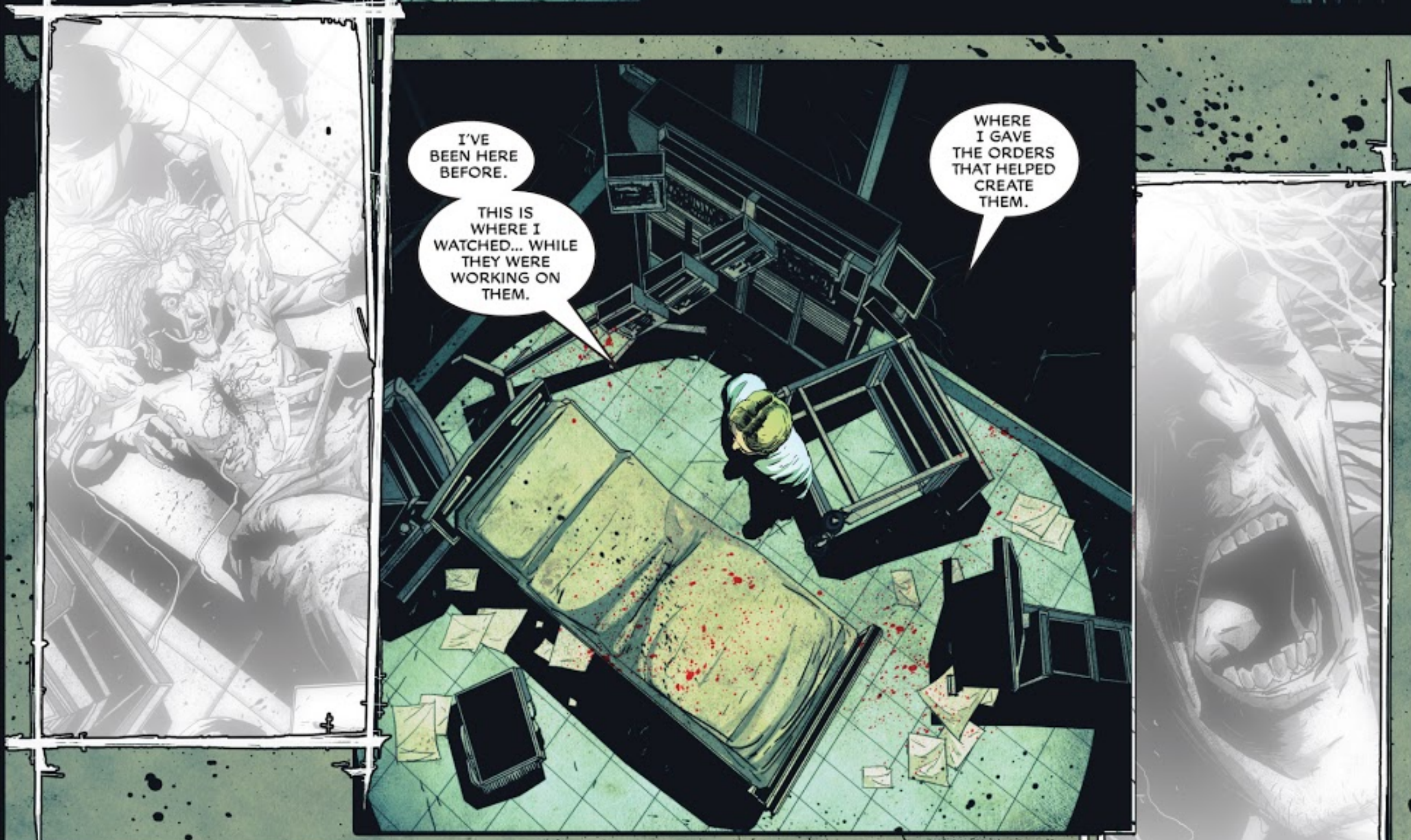
BUT WE
BOTH CAME LOOKING
FOR ANSWERS TO OUR
PAST. I'M HOPING WE
FIND IT HERE. TONIGHT.
SO WHY DON'T WE SPLIT
UP AND SEE WHAT
WE CAN FIND.

I'LL MEET
YOU ON THE
TOP FLOOR OF
THAT BUNKER
IN TWENTY
MINUTES.

SURE.
SOUNDS
GOOD.







Chapter Two: The CONSPIRACY



WYNN!

I THOUGHT
YOU WERE MEETING
ME IN THE
OBSERVATORY?

I WAS...
I'M JUST DOING
MY PART. ACTING
LIKE I'M AN
INTRUDER.



THEN YOU'RE
DOING A CONVINCING
JOB. BECAUSE TO ME IT
LOOKED LIKE YOU WERE
SEARCHING FOR SOMETHING.
I ADMIRE THE DEPTH
YOU'VE TAKEN IN YOUR
NEW ROLE.



I'M SURE IT'S
BEEN VERY HARD ON YOU--
BUT YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN
AWARE HOW MUCH WE REGARD
LOYALTY. YOURS, SO FAR, HAS
BEEN IMPECCABLE. DESPITE
THE RATHER COMPLICATED
SITUATIONS YOU'VE BEEN
INVOLVED IN.



I UNDERSTAND
MY LIFE! I DON'T
NEED ONE OF YOUR
LECTURES.



YOU'RE
QUITE RIGHT.
FOR BOTH OF US
IT'S FAR TOO
LATE FOR THAT,
ISN'T IT?





BUT WHETHER YOU
KNOW IT OR NOT-- YOU'VE
DONE US *BOTH* A FAVOR WITH
YOUR ACTIONS. YOU'RE GETTING THE
NECESSARY ANSWERS YOU REQUIRE.
WHILE I'M FINALLY IN A POSITION
TO ACCOMPLISH MY ONE
TRUE GOAL.



AND SADLY--
NO ONE, OTHER
THAN MYSELF, WAS
EVER PRIVY TO
THAT GOAL.

YOU SEE, RICHARD--
EVEN THOUGH I'VE BEEN
INVOLVED IN DOZENS OF HIGHLY
SENSITIVE INTERNATIONAL PLOYS--
WITH HUNDREDS OF WORLD LEADERS
OR THEIR SURROGATES, THERE
WAS STILL SOMETHING MISSING.
SOME GREATER PURPOSE
TO FULFILL.



AND THOUGH
THIS MAY SOUND SHALLOW
TO YOU-- THE CONSTANT
STRUGGLE TO HOLD AND MAINTAIN
POWER CAN BE EXHAUSTING. RARELY
IS THERE A MOMENT TO ENJOY YOUR
ACCOMPLISHMENTS BECAUSE THE
SCOPE AND REACH OF THAT POWER
ONLY FORCES OTHERS ON THE
GLOBE TO TRY AND TAKE IT
AWAY FROM YOU.

THINK ABOUT
YOUR OWN STRUGGLES.
TRYING TO ACCEPT LIVING
AS THE CREATURE CALLED
'TREMOR,' THEN FINDING
LATER THERE MAY BE ANOTHER
ALTERNATIVE. BUT TO GET
THERE YOU MIGHT HAVE TO
SACRIFICE YOUR POWER
KNOWING IT CAN BE
USED AS A FORCE
OF GOOD.

SO WHICH PATH
DO YOU CHOOSE?
WE BOTH KNOW
THERE'S ONLY ONE
ANSWER.



IT'S THE
PATH THAT
BRINGS
INNER
PEACE.





NOW
WE'RE BOTH
SO VERY
CLOSE TO
THAT END.



CAN'T
YOU FEEL
IT?



FEEL
WHAT?

OH COME,
RICHARD! WE'VE
BOTH BEEN AROUND
HIM TOO LONG TO NOT
KNOW WHEN HE'S CLOSE.
WHEN HIS SHADOW
HAS MERGED WITH
OUR OWN.

MAKING
THE AIR
TAKE ON A
SLIGHT CHILL, SO
THE HAIR ON
OUR NECKS
RISE.

IT'S ALL SO
SEDUCTIVE.



AND
IT'S ALL SO
VERY,
VERY...



PREDICTABLE!



THAT'S
IT! DIRECT
YOUR ANGER
AT ME!

FOCUS
ON ME.

KRAK

SPAWN!
IT'S NOT
WHAT IT
LOOKS LIKE!
I CAN
EXPLAIN!

EXPLAIN
WHAT? THAT
YOU'VE
BETRAYED
ME?!

YOU'LL SHUT
YOUR MOUTH
IF YOU KNOW
WHAT'S GOOD
FOR YOU!



BECAUSE
MR. WYNN
AND I NEED
TO HAVE
A LITTLE
'CHAT'!



YES OR NO--
DOES RICHARD
WORK FOR
YOU?

DEPENDS
ON YOUR
PERSPECTIVE.

YES!
OR
NO!

Gasp!



STOP IT!
YOU'RE
KILLING
HIM!

WE NEED
HIM ALIVE! SO...
THE ANSWER IS
YES! I MADE
A DEAL WITH
WYNN.

BUT ONLY
BECAUSE HE
SEEMED TO WANT
TO GET NEAR YOU SO
BADLY! BUT WHY?!
HE KNOWS YOU'VE
GOT THE POWER
TO KILL HIM!



IT'S
BECAUSE HE
WANTS TO TELL YOU
SOMETHING.
SOMETHING THAT
MIGHT **CHANGE**
YOUR LIFE!



THAT'S
WHY I DID
THIS... NOT TO
TRICK YOU, BUT
TO GET YOU
ANSWERS!

THEN SELFISHLY...
I WAS HOPING TO
GET *MY ANSWERS* TOO!
BECAUSE SO FAR I
HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO DO
THAT ANY BETTER THAN
YOU-- AND THIS WAS THE
ONLY WAY I COULD THINK
OF TO FINALLY
GET THEM.

LIAR!

WHY? WHY
WOULD I LIE TO
YOU? MY POWERS
ARE GONE-- YOU
TOOK THOSE.

SO IF YOU
WANT TO HURT ME...
THERE'S NOT A *DAMN*
THING I CAN DO TO STOP IT!
BUT I'M TELLING YOU, SPAWN--
WYNN HAS INFORMATION
YOU WANT. AT LEAST GET
THAT BEFORE YOU SNUFF
HIM OUT.

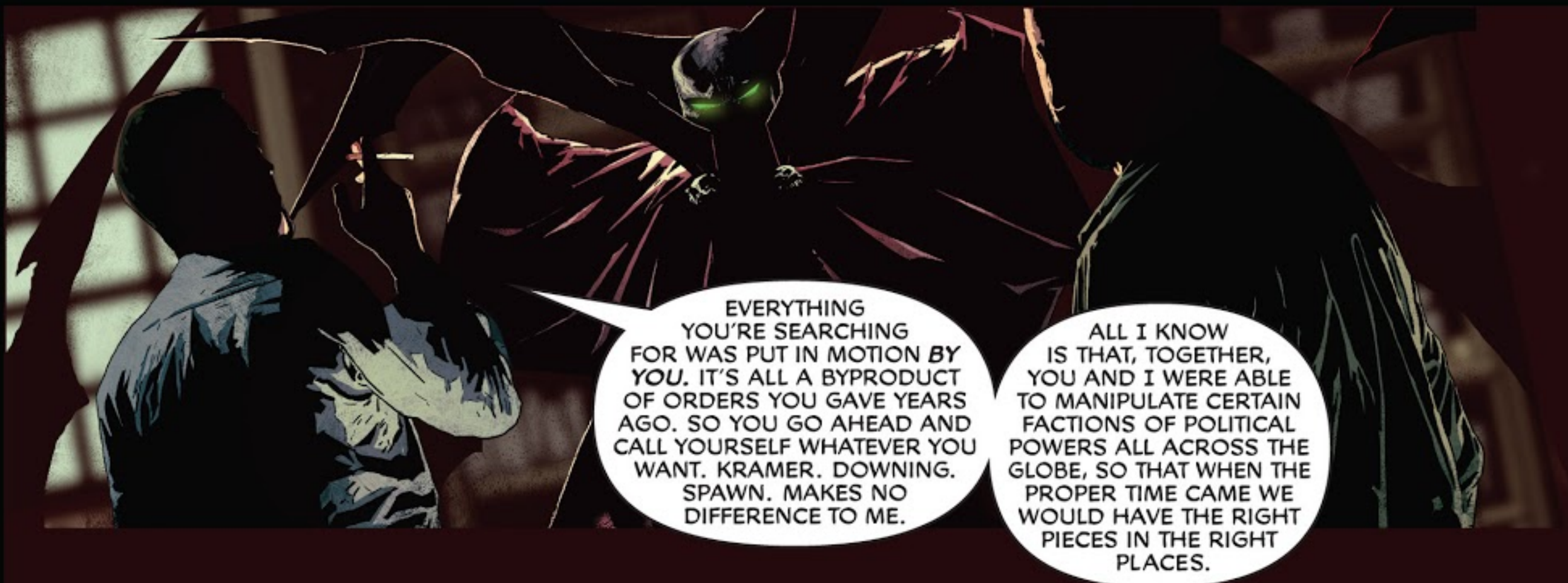
THUMP

koff

koff

THANKS,
RICHARD...
I OWE YOU
ONE.

NOW WHY
DON'T WE
CUT RIGHT
TO THE
CHASE.



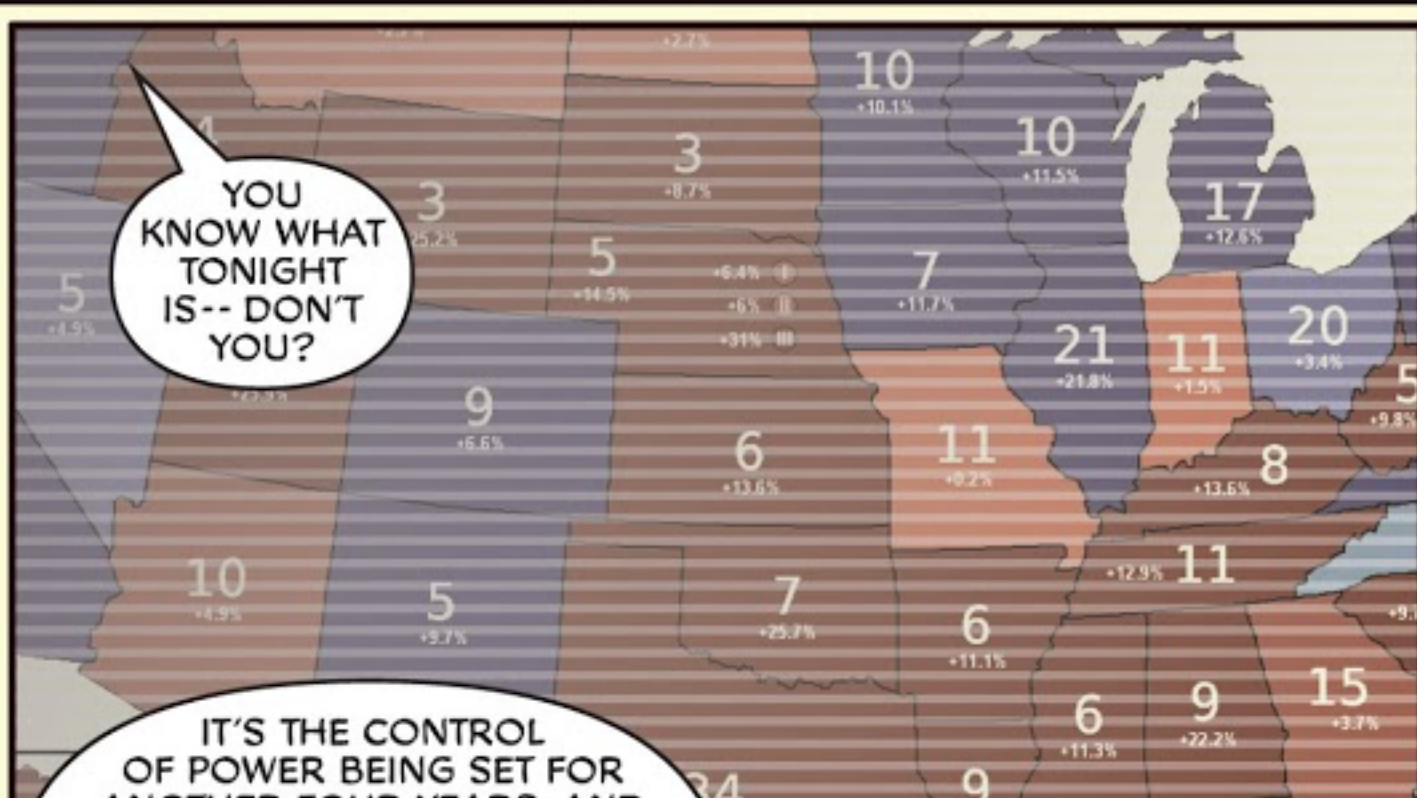
EVERYTHING YOU'RE SEARCHING FOR WAS PUT IN MOTION **BY YOU**. IT'S ALL A BYPRODUCT OF ORDERS YOU GAVE YEARS AGO. SO YOU GO AHEAD AND CALL YOURSELF WHATEVER YOU WANT. KRAMER. DOWNING. SPAWN. MAKES NO DIFFERENCE TO ME.

ALL I KNOW IS THAT, TOGETHER, YOU AND I WERE ABLE TO MANIPULATE CERTAIN FACTIONS OF POLITICAL POWERS ALL ACROSS THE GLOBE, SO THAT WHEN THE PROPER TIME CAME WE WOULD HAVE THE RIGHT PIECES IN THE RIGHT PLACES.



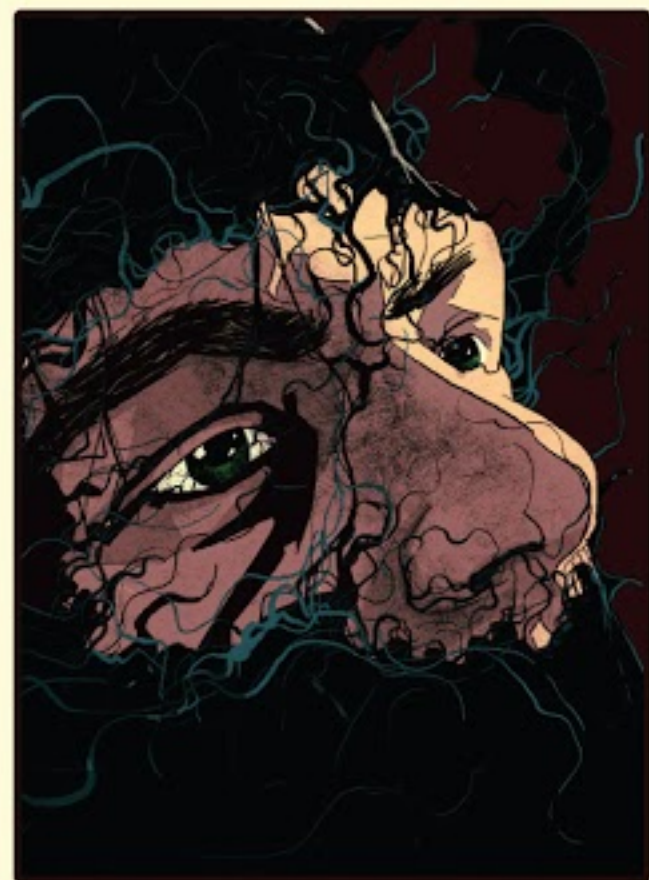
HERE... LET ME SHOW YOU.

CLIK



YOU KNOW WHAT TONIGHT IS-- DON'T YOU?

IT'S THE CONTROL OF POWER BEING SET FOR ANOTHER FOUR YEARS. AND THOUGH MOST AMERICANS JUST RECENTLY MADE UP THEIR MINDS-- PEOPLE LIKE US HAVE BEEN WORKING THE BACK ROOMS FOR **DECADES!** MAKING SURE THAT WE WOULD GET THE RESULTS WE WANTED.



THAT'S NOT HOW THIS WORKS-- **AND YOU KNOW IT!** SINCE MOST OF THE MISSION'S MODEL WAS BASED ON RECOMMENDATIONS BY YOU.

I DON'T CARE WHO ELSE YOU'VE CONNED ALONG THE WAY. THIS IS ABOUT YOU AND I. NOT ANYONE ELSE!



YOU WERE
SO EAGER TO BRING
THOSE HIGH RANKING
CONNECTIONS OF YOURS
ON BOARD-- BECAUSE YOU
KNEW THEY WANTED
THE SAME THINGS
YOU DID.

MONEY.
POWER.
FAME.

I REMEMBER
HOW YOU USED TO
LAUGH BEHIND THEIR
BACKS-- AT HOW EASILY THEY
TRADED THEIR INTEGRITY FOR
A CHANCE TO BE CLOSE TO
THE ACTION. AND TONIGHT...
THE CULMINATION OF ALL
THAT PLANNING FINALLY
BEARS FRUIT.



SO, YOU WANT
TO STAND THERE AND
TELL ME YOU'RE ONLY
CONCERNED ABOUT YOURSELF.
THAT'S FINE. UNFORTUNATELY,
THE REALITY IS OUR FINAL
PIECE HAS JUST BEEN PUT IN
PLACE AND THE OBAMA
CAMP WAS ALWAYS MORE
THAN WILLING TO
JOIN US.

Next:
AMERICA TURNS BLUE





DIGITAL
EDITION

226
JAN

APPROVED
BY THE
IMAGE
COMICS



AUTHORITY

THE INCREDULOUS

SPAWN



LIVE

Chicago



AMERICA.
I BELIEVE WE CAN
KEEP THE PROMISE OF
OUR FOUNDING... THE IDEA
THAT IF YOU'RE WILLING TO
WORK HARD, IT DOESN'T
MATTER WHO YOU ARE... OR
WHERE YOU COME FROM...
OR WHAT YOU LOOK
LIKE, OR WHERE
YOU LOVE.

IT DOESN'T
MATTER IF YOU'RE
BLACK OR WHITE. OR
HISPANIC. OR ASIAN. OR
NATIVE AMERICAN-- OR
YOUNG OR OLD, OR RICH
OR POOR... ABLED, DISABLED,
GAY OR STRAIGHT, YOU CAN
MAKE IT HERE IN AMERICA
IF YOU'RE WILLING
TO TRY!

BREAKING NEWS



I REMEMBER
BEING THAT NAÏVE
ONCE. THINKING
I CONTROLLED MY
OWN DESTINY.
BUT...





"...I WAS YOUNG.
DIDN'T KNOW BETTER.
FORTUNATELY IT
DIDN'T LAST LONG."

I'LL BE DOING
MOST OF THE BRIEFING
DURING THIS SESSION--
THOUGH YOU'RE WELCOME TO
ADD ANY DETAIL SPECIFICS
I MIGHT MISS.

YES,
COMMANDER.



AS YOU KNOW, YOUR
RECENT SECURITY UPGRADE BY
THE COMMISSION MEANS WE BELIEVE
YOU'RE READY FOR INCLUSION TO OUR
ONGOING '*CLANDESTINE MEETINGS*'. YOU
SHOULD BE QUITE PROUD OF YOURSELF,
AGENT WYNN... VERY FEW EVER
MAKE IT THIS FAR.

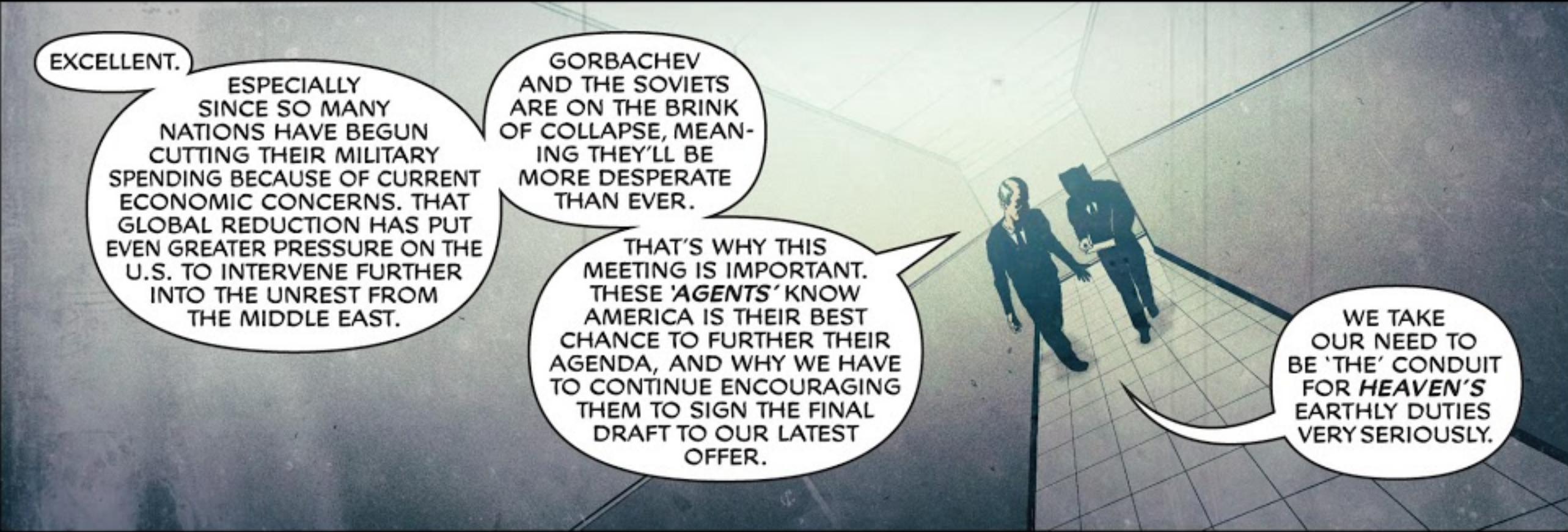
DO YOU
HAVE YOUR
REPORTS IN
ORDER?



I DO. THEY
INCLUDE ALL
THE FINANCIAL
DATA YOU
REQUESTED...



... AS WELL
AS PRELIMINARY
INSIGHT FOR A
POTENTIAL GERMAN
FACILITY.



EXCELLENT.

ESPECIALLY
SINCE SO MANY
NATIONS HAVE BEGUN
CUTTING THEIR MILITARY
SPENDING BECAUSE OF CURRENT
ECONOMIC CONCERNS. THAT
GLOBAL REDUCTION HAS PUT
EVEN GREATER PRESSURE ON THE
U.S. TO INTERVENE FURTHER
INTO THE UNREST FROM
THE MIDDLE EAST.

GORBACHEV
AND THE SOVIETS
ARE ON THE BRINK
OF COLLAPSE, MEAN-
ING THEY'LL BE
MORE DESPERATE
THAN EVER.

THAT'S WHY THIS
MEETING IS IMPORTANT.
THESE '*AGENTS*' KNOW
AMERICA IS THEIR BEST
CHANCE TO FURTHER THEIR
AGENDA, AND WHY WE HAVE
TO CONTINUE ENCOURAGING
THEM TO SIGN THE FINAL
DRAFT TO OUR LATEST
OFFER.

WE TAKE
OUR NEED TO
BE '*THE*' CONDUIT
FOR *HEAVEN'S*
EARTHLY DUTIES
VERY SERIOUSLY.



ONE
LAST
THING...

THEY'LL NEVER
LOOK YOU
DIRECTLY IN THE
EYE--I THINK IT'S
SOME *SUPERIORITY*
THING.

IT TOOK ME
AWHILE TO GET
USED TO IT,
ALONG WITH
THEIR OTHER ODD
MANNERISMS.

GOT
IT.



BZZZT

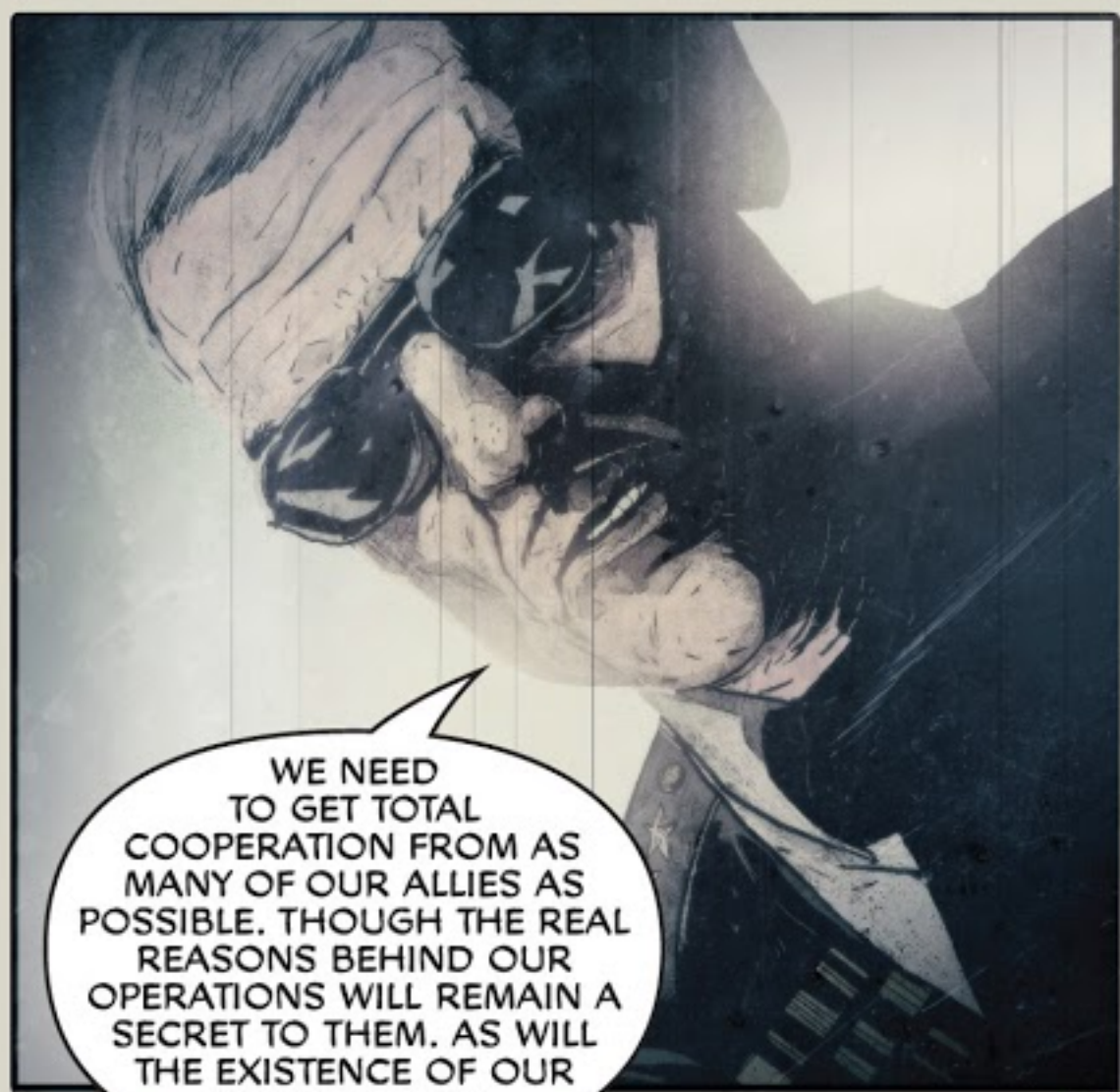


AHH...
GENTLEMEN!
RIGHT ON TIME--
GOOD! THEY LIKE
PUNCTUALITY.



WE'LL DISPENSE
WITH ANY SMALL
TALK AND JUST GET
RIGHT DOWN TO
BUSINESS.

OUR GOAL HERE
TONIGHT IS FOR BOTH
PARTIES TO TRY AND
FIND COMMON STRATEGIES
THAT'LL ALLEVIATE ANY
FURTHER ESCALATION OF
MILITARY FORCE IN THE MIDDLE
EAST--AND AT THE SAME
TIME NOT COMPROMISE
ANY OF OUR ACCESS TO
THAT REGION.



WE NEED TO GET TOTAL COOPERATION FROM AS MANY OF OUR ALLIES AS POSSIBLE. THOUGH THE REAL REASONS BEHIND OUR OPERATIONS WILL REMAIN A SECRET TO THEM. AS WILL THE EXISTENCE OF OUR FRIENDS HERE.



I LIKE TO CALL THEM THE 'GOD SQUAD'-- BUT THEY DON'T SEEM TO HAVE A SENSE OF HUMOR.

YOU'LL NEED A BETTER CODE NAME THAT WON'T PISS 'EM OFF.



NOW PLEASE INTRODUCE YOURSELVES.

I'M SPECIAL AGENT JASON WYNN.

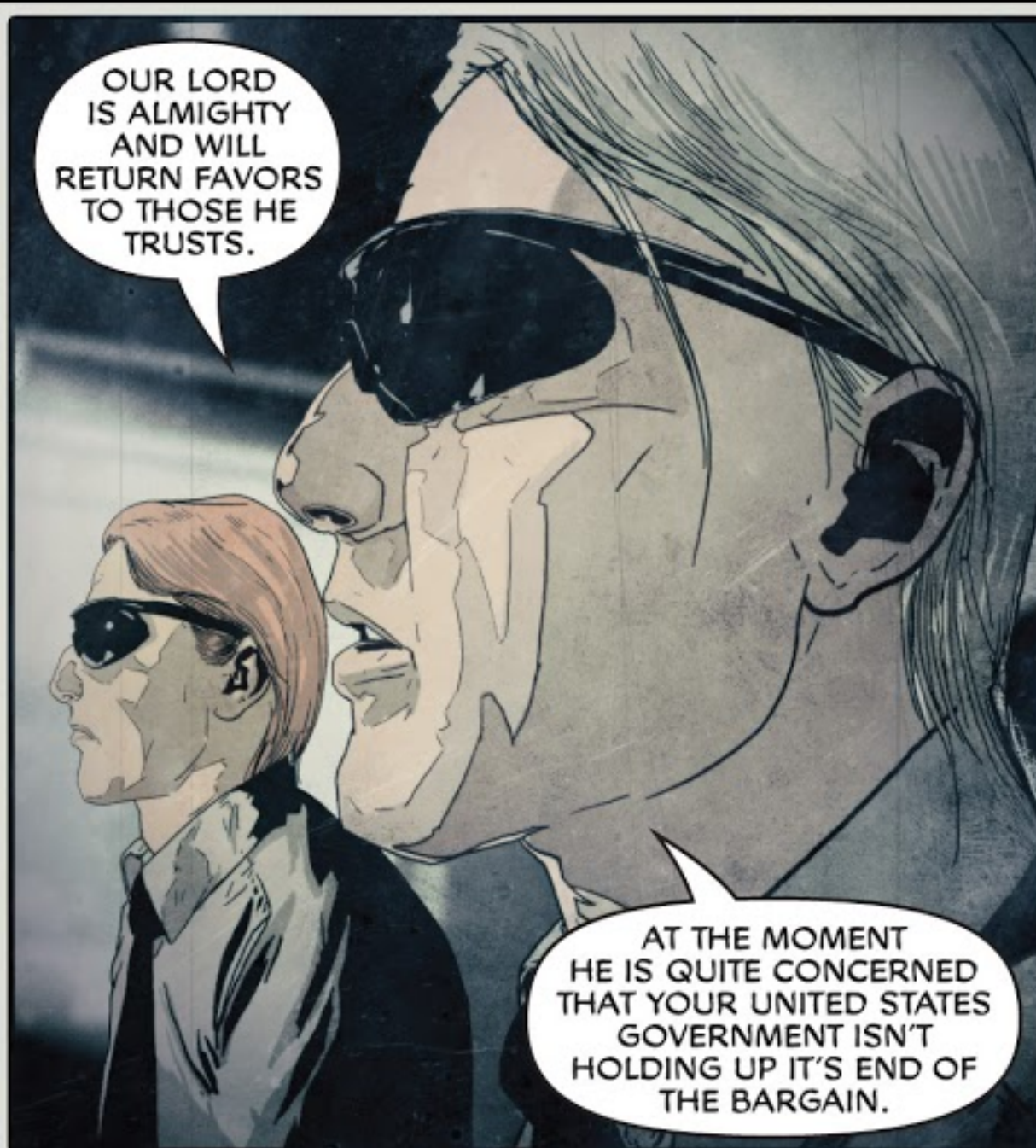
I'M COMMANDER HAGGERTY. I BELIEVE I'VE BRIEFLY MET A COUPLE OF YOU IN THE PAST.

SO YOU KNOW I'M ALREADY VESTED IN MOST OF THE REQUESTS YOU'VE ISSUED US.



WE APPRECIATE YOUR GOVERNMENT'S CONTINUED EFFORTS TO SECURE THE TARGETED AREAS WE NEED. BUT ANY FURTHER DELAYS WILL SUBSTANTIALLY HINDER OUR LEADER'S STRATEGIC POSITIONING.

OF COURSE. BY THE WAY, HOW IS YOUR SUPERIOR?



OUR LORD IS ALMIGHTY AND WILL RETURN FAVORS TO THOSE HE TRUSTS.

AT THE MOMENT HE IS QUITE CONCERNED THAT YOUR UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT ISN'T HOLDING UP IT'S END OF THE BARGAIN.

I MUST RESPECTFULLY DISAGREE. THE BOLIVIAN FORCES HAVE JOINED IN WITH THE AFGHAN REBELS TO MAKE SURE THAT ALL OF YOUR SACRED 'DEAD ZONES' ARE PROPERLY FORTIFIED.

THOUGH NONE OF THEM ARE EVEN AWARE THEY'RE PROTECTING SOME OF HEAVEN'S PORTALS. OUR COMPLICATION IS THAT THE DESIGNATION OF WHERE YOUR GOD PUT THOSE 'DEAD ZONES' MIGHT HAVE MADE SENSE A THOUSAND YEARS AGO BUT...

BUT!... ON TODAY'S GEO-POLITICAL MAP IT MEANS WE'RE INFRINGING ON TERRITORIES WE HAVE NO LEGAL BUSINESS BEING IN! SO, IT ISN'T *OUR POLICIES* THAT ARE SLOWING DOWN THIS PROCESS. WE'VE DONE EVERYTHING IN OUR POWER TO SHIFT BLAME ON THE SOVIETS. AND SO FAR THAT'S ALL THE WORLD BELIEVES THIS IS-- JUST MORE CIVIL UNREST BETWEEN NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES!

THOSE ARE STRONG WORDS, AGENT WYNN.

MY APOLOGIES. I MEANT NO DISRESPECT. I JUST WANT TO MAKE SURE WE'RE ALL DEALING WITH THE *CURRENT* REALITIES OF THIS WORLD.

SO ARE WE.

THAT IS WHY WE HAVE BEEN CHANNELING MONIES TO THE PROPER INDIVIDUALS SO THEY CAN INVEST INTO YOUR OPERATIONS UNDETECTED.

WHICH HAS BEEN WORKING...

...THOUGH FROM OUR PERSPECTIVE, THE NEED FOR ANOTHER TYPE OF SOLDIER IS BECOMING QUITE APPARENT.

WE CAN'T CONTINUE TO SEND IN U.S. BACKED TROOPS WITHOUT EVENTUALLY TIPPING OUR HAND. AND SINCE HEAVEN WANTS ITS WARRIORS TO REMAIN NEUTRAL IN ALL OF THIS-- OUR BEST OPTION FOR THE FUTURE, IS TO JUST USE LESS AGENTS. BUT TO DO THAT, WE WILL NEED MORE FUNDING. WITH THE ULTIMATE GOAL BEING THE CREATION OF A *NEW STRAIN* OF MAN. ONE FUSED WITH BOTH THE ATTRIBUTES OF A HUMAN AND AN ANGEL.



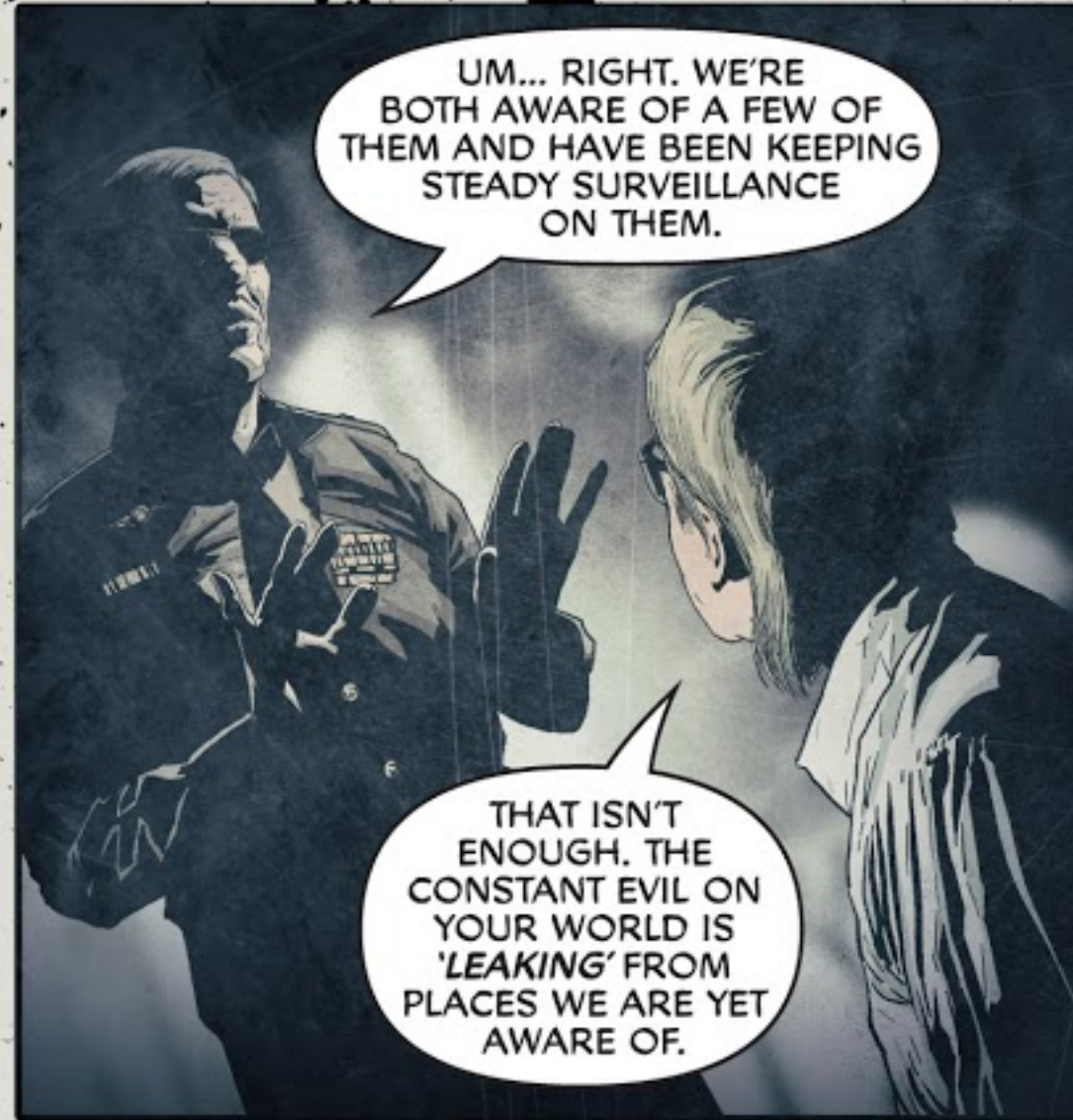
WE HAVE HAD SIMILAR DISCUSSIONS AND BELIEVE A HYBRID AGENT WOULD SERVE MANY PURPOSES.

BECAUSE AS YOU KNOW... PROTECTING OUR 'DEAD ZONES' IS THE FRONT HALF OF OUR RELATIONSHIP. THE SECOND-- AND PERHAPS MORE IMPORTANT PIECE IS FINDING THE LOCATION OF HELL'S 'DEAD ZONES'.

I KNOW YOU'VE BEEN PRESSING THAT FOR QUITE SOME TIME...



...SINCE THEIR CREATION THOUSANDS OF YEARS AGO.



UM... RIGHT. WE'RE BOTH AWARE OF A FEW OF THEM AND HAVE BEEN KEEPING STEADY SURVEILLANCE ON THEM.

THAT ISN'T ENOUGH. THE CONSTANT EVIL ON YOUR WORLD IS 'LEAKING' FROM PLACES WE ARE YET AWARE OF.



THEN I'VE GOT A SIMPLE SOLUTION. WHY DON'T WE JUST COMMANDEER THE ZONES WE KNOW ABOUT INSTEAD OF JUST MONITORING THEM?

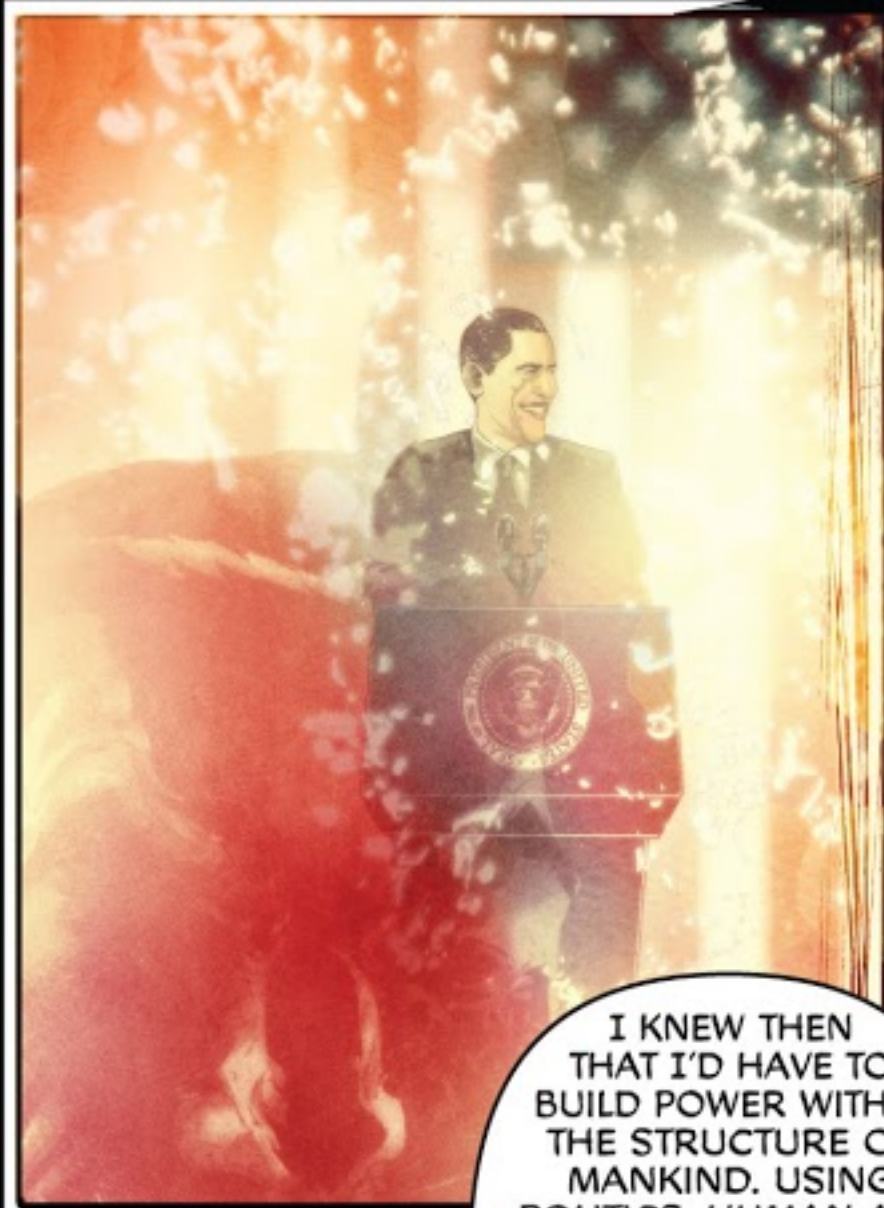


BECAUSE, AGENT WYNN... THERE IS A TREATY IN PLACE! WE ARE, AT THIS TIME, OBLIGATED TO OBEY ALL THE PROVISIONS OF THAT AGREEMENT.

ANYTHING ELSE WOULD BE CONSIDERED TREASON ON THE PART OF HEAVEN.

AND WHAT IF YOU FIND OUT HELL HASN'T BEEN LIVING BY THE SAME STANDARDS? YOU DON'T PAY THE PRICE -- WE DO! BECAUSE IT'S ALL HAPPENING HERE ON EARTH!

Now.



THAT WAS THE MOMENT I FIRST BEGAN TO UNDERSTAND. HEAVEN WAS TRUSTING HELL TO BEHAVE AND VICE VERSA? THINK OF THAT ABSURDITY.

I KNEW THEN THAT I'D HAVE TO BUILD POWER WITHIN THE STRUCTURE OF MANKIND. USING POLITICS. HUMAN AID. WEAPON EXCHANGES. WHATEVER IT TOOK TO ASSURE THAT WE WOULDN'T BE CAUGHT ON THE SHORT END OF ANY MISSTEP BY HEAVEN.

BECAUSE I QUICKLY FOUND OUT HEAVEN WAS ALWAYS INTERESTED IN CONTROLLING AND CORRUPTING THE SOULS OF MEN. PERHAPS MORE THAN HELL. THEY'RE JUST BETTER AT DISGUIISING IT BECAUSE THEY KNEW MANKIND HAD BEGUN BUILDING ENTIRE ORGANIZATIONS AROUND RELIGION.

AND WHEN HUMANS DECIDED TO PICK HEAVEN AS THE GOOD GUYS IN THEIR WRITINGS, GOD AND HIS ANGELS HAD TO KEEP UP THE APPEARANCE THEY WERE THE POLAR OPPOSITE OF HELL-- IT'S REALLY BEEN THE **GREATEST CON** PERPETRATED UPON MANKIND.



WHAT'S ANY OF THAT GOT TO DO WITH ME?

I'M GETTING THERE-- BECAUSE THE PART OF THOSE CONVERSATIONS THAT GRABBED MY ATTENTION THE MOST... WAS THE IDEA OF A '**HYBRID**' SOLDIER!

AND THAT--MY DEAR FRIEND, KRAMER-- IS HOW WE FIRST MET.



19 Years Ago.



THE CONSTANT STRIFE IN THAT PART OF THE WORLD CONTINUES TO BE ATTRIBUTED TO THE COLLAPSE OF THE SOVIET EMPIRE. SINCE SPLITTING INTO A NUMBER OF SMALLER COUNTRIES, EACH WITH THEIR OWN GOVERNING BODIES, EXPERTS STILL BELIEVE COMPETING COUNTRIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST ARE TRIPPING OVER EACH OTHER IN THE PURSUIT OF CAPTURING SOME OF THE POWER INFLUENCE IN THOSE SURROUNDING AREAS.

COMPLICATING MATTERS EVEN FURTHER IS THE RECENT DEVELOPMENT OF THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO BEGIN WITHDRAWING SOME OF ITS WEAPONS EXCHANGE PROGRAMS FROM SOME OF OUR MOST TRUSTED ALLIES. THOSE MOVES, WHICH THE WHITE HOUSE ATTRIBUTES TO BUDGETARY CONSTRAINTS, HAS ONLY ESCALATED THE TURMOIL WITHIN SOME COUNTRIES.



RECENT INVESTIGATIVE REPORTS INDICATE THAT IT MIGHT NOT BE THE SOVIET COLLAPSE DRIVING MOST OF THE ACTIONS NEAR THE SYRIAN BORDERS. INSTEAD OUR JOURNALISTS HAVE CONFIRMED THAT MORE THAN ONE MILITARY FACTION, WHICH WAS VERY LOYAL TO AMERICA'S CAUSES, HAS NOW ABANDONED THEIR COALITION WITH THE U.S. ARMY. SOURCES SAY THAT CONSTANT DISAGREEMENTS OVER WHERE MANY OF THE WATCH POSTS WERE BEING POSITIONED CONTRIBUTED TO THE BREAK UP.

ACCORDING TO ONE HIGH RANKING OFFICIAL FROM THAT REGION, THE STATIONS BEING BUILT ARE IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE IN SOME CASES. AND IN A DIRECT QUOTE HE SAID, *"THE U.S. APPEARS TO BE PROTECTING NOTHING! THEY HAVE SECURED RINGS AROUND VARIOUS AREAS WHERE NO PEOPLE RESIDE AND NO TRANSPORT LINES EXIST."*



I'M TELLING YOU FOLKS... ***DON'T BUY IT!***

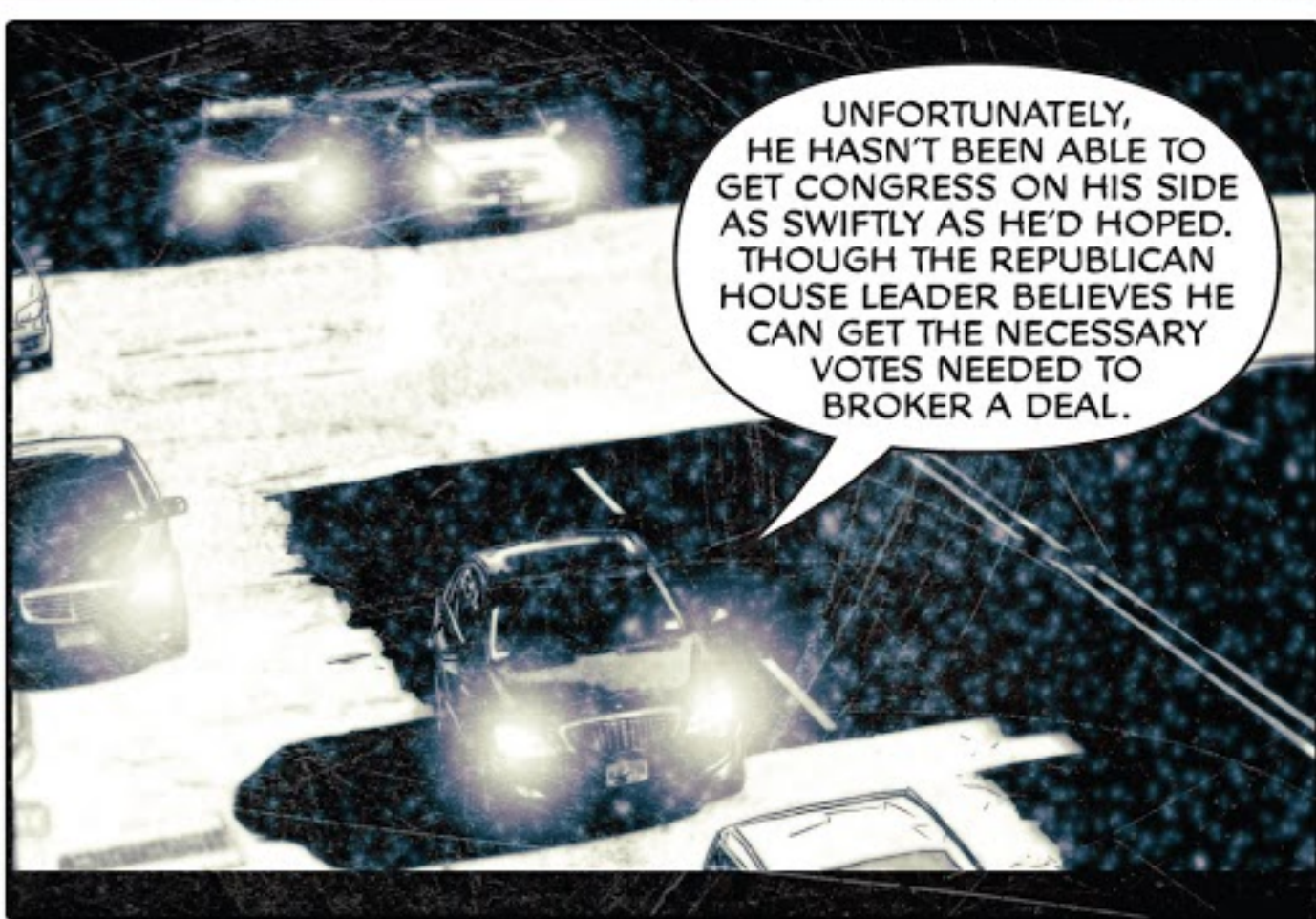
NOT FOR A SECOND!... EXPERTS ARE TRYING TO USE THE RUSSIANS AS A CONVENIENT SCAPEGOAT FOR FAILED U.S. MILITARY INCOMPETENCE! IF I WAS A MUSLIM FAITHFUL, I'D BE ***TICKED OFF TOO!*** FIRST AMERICANS GET THEM TO START A FIGHT AGAINST THE SOVIETS BY LOADING THEM DOWN WITH HEAVY ARTILLERY... ***THEN*** WE PULL THOSE SUPPLIES WHILE STILL ASKING THEM TO ASSIST US IN SETTING UP CAMPS DESIGNED TO KEEP PEOPLE AWAY FROM AREAS WHERE PEOPLE HAVE ***NEVER*** WANTED TO GO IN THE FIRST PLACE!

GIMME A BREAK!!

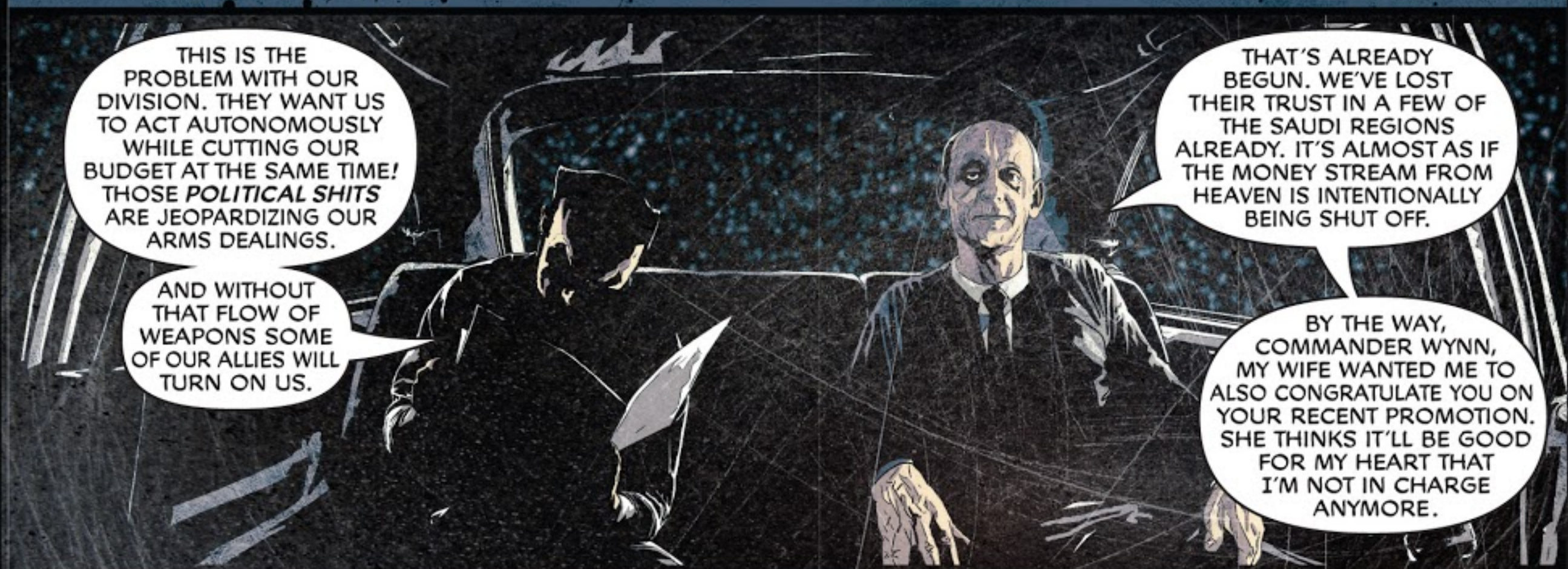
NOW WE HAVE COUNTRIES CHANGING SIDES FROM WEEK-TO-WEEK BECAUSE NO ONE OVER THERE HAS A CLUE ON WHO TO TRUST! ***CAN YOU IMAGINE*** THE COMPLETE MISSTEPS ON OUR SIDE WHEN OUR ALLIES ARE WONDERING IF SIDING WITH THE FORMER SOVIETS IS THE ***ROUTE TO GO?!*** ***THANK GOD*** THE FUNDING IS DRYING UP FOR THESE INSANE MISSIONS US TAX PAYERS ARE SPONSORING!



I DON'T KNOW WHY THE PRESIDENT IS *DRAGGING HIS FEET* WITH OUR REQUEST!



UNFORTUNATELY, HE HASN'T BEEN ABLE TO GET CONGRESS ON HIS SIDE AS SWIFTLY AS HE'D HOPED. THOUGH THE REPUBLICAN HOUSE LEADER BELIEVES HE CAN GET THE NECESSARY VOTES NEEDED TO *BROKER A DEAL*.



THIS IS THE PROBLEM WITH OUR DIVISION. THEY WANT US TO ACT AUTONOMOUSLY WHILE CUTTING OUR BUDGET AT THE SAME TIME! THOSE *POLITICAL SHITS* ARE JEOPARDIZING OUR ARMS DEALINGS.

AND WITHOUT THAT FLOW OF WEAPONS SOME OF OUR ALLIES WILL TURN ON US.

THAT'S ALREADY BEGUN. WE'VE LOST THEIR TRUST IN A FEW OF THE SAUDI REGIONS ALREADY. IT'S ALMOST AS IF THE MONEY STREAM FROM HEAVEN IS INTENTIONALLY BEING SHUT OFF.

BY THE WAY, COMMANDER WYNN, MY WIFE WANTED ME TO ALSO CONGRATULATE YOU ON YOUR RECENT PROMOTION. SHE THINKS IT'LL BE GOOD FOR MY HEART THAT I'M NOT IN CHARGE ANYMORE.



SHE'S RIGHT. YOU DID LET THE STRESS GET TO YOU. PLEASE, GIVE HER MY BEST.

JESUS...!

LOOK AT THIS REPORT! I SWEAR HEAVEN AND IT'S GOON SQUAD IS TRYING TO RUB MY NOSE IN IT! IF THEY RESTRICT THEIR FINANCIAL SUPPORT WE LOSE MOST OF OUR INTEL. WE'LL BE FLYING BLIND. AND IF I DIDN'T KNOW ANY BETTER... I'D SAY HEAVEN IS TRYING TO *CHEAT US!*

I'VE BEEN THINKING THE SAME THING. IT'S LIKE THEY'RE TRYING TO GO AT IT ON THEIR OWN AND DON'T WANT AMERICA OR ANYONE ELSE KNOWING WHAT THEY'RE UP TO.



EXACTLY!

WE NEED TO BEGIN SETTING UP OUR OWN COALITION OF SENATORS, CONGRESSMEN, LOBBYISTS AND OTHER INTEREST GROUPS THAT WILL BE LOYAL DIRECTLY TO US. PEOPLE AND VOTES WE CAN CONTROL.



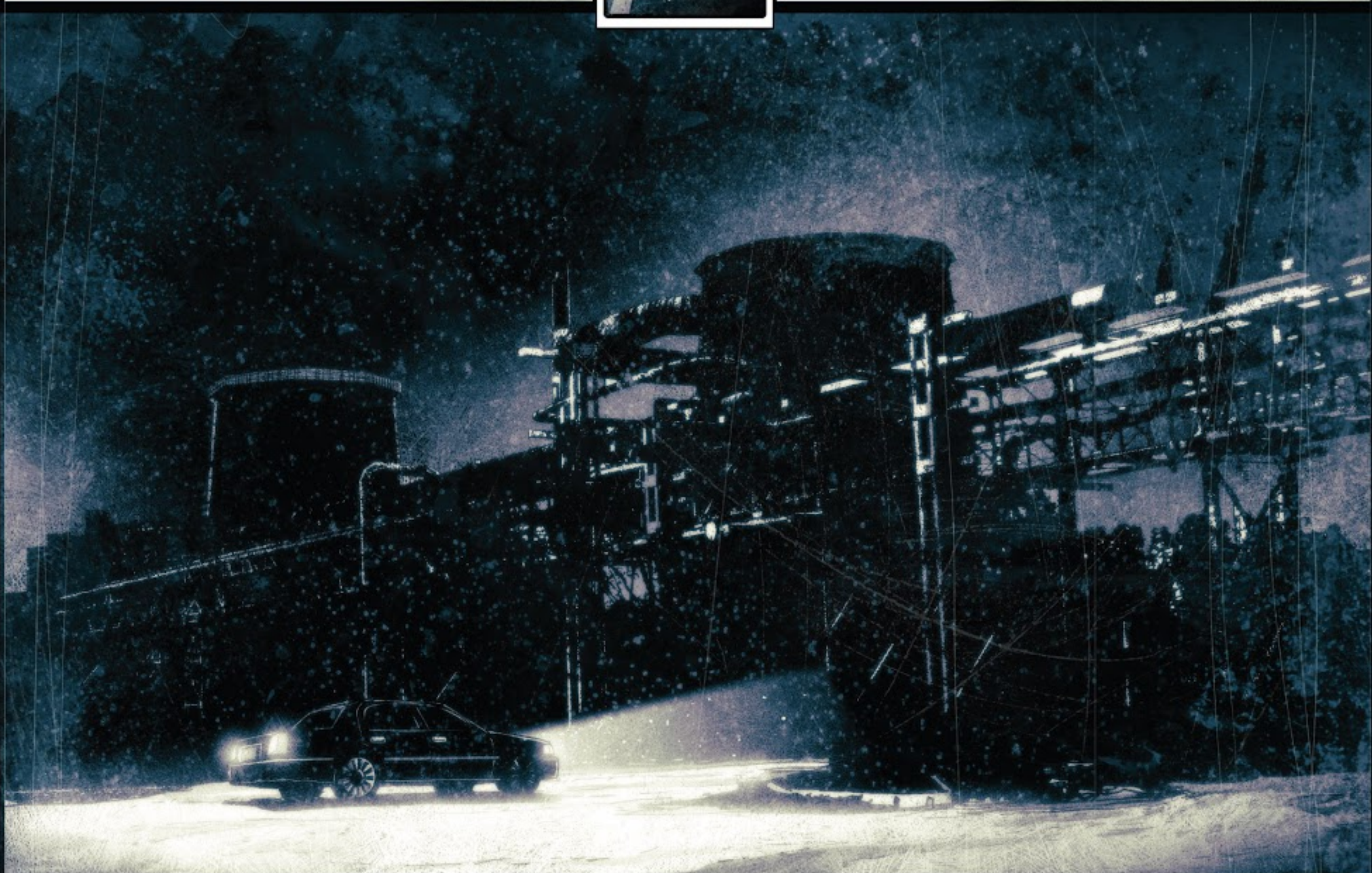
SINCE MOST OF THOSE IN WASHINGTON ARE ONLY CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR OWN RE-ELECTION WE CAN QUICKLY SET UP A SYSTEM THAT'LL GET THEM TO CONSTANTLY VOTE IN OUR DIRECTION.

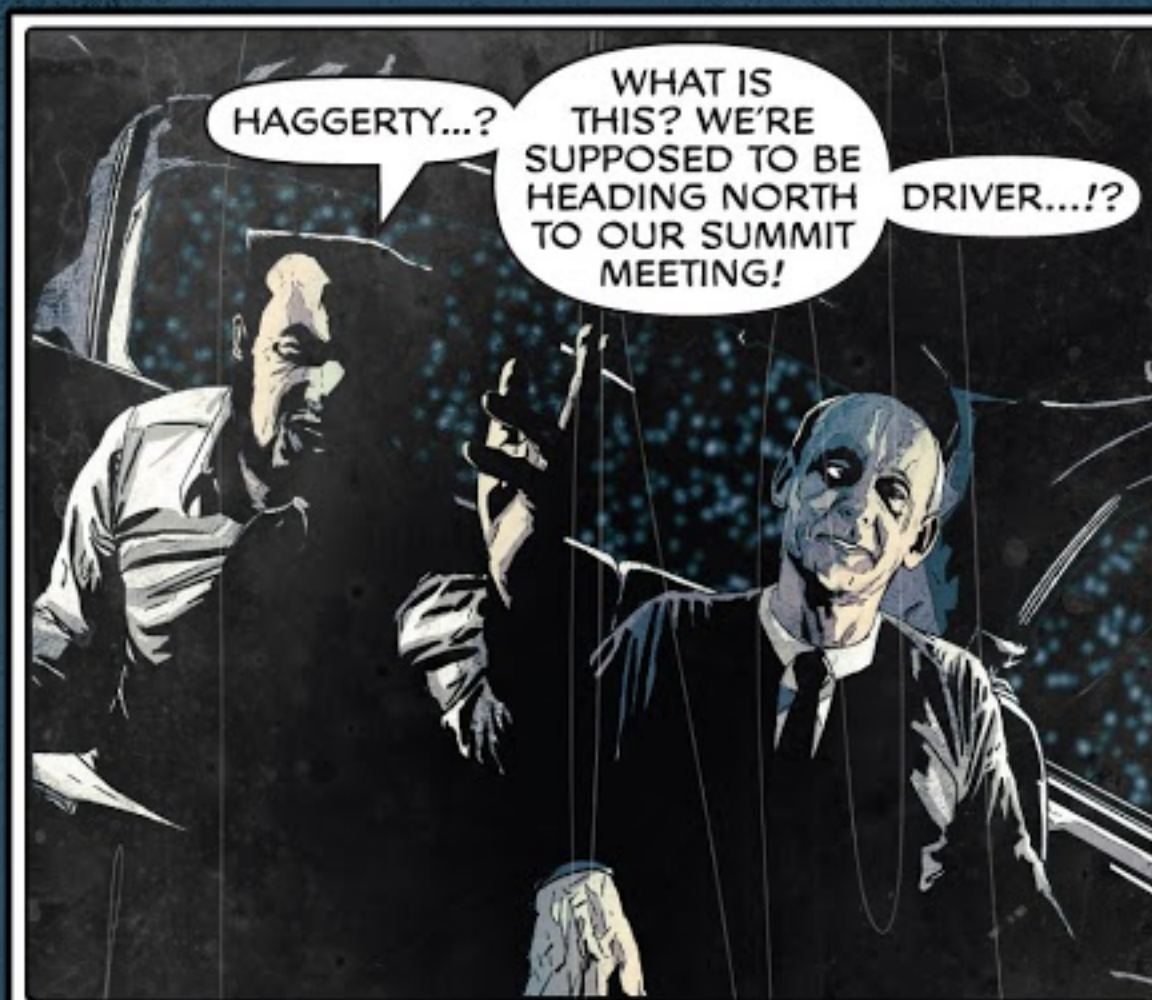


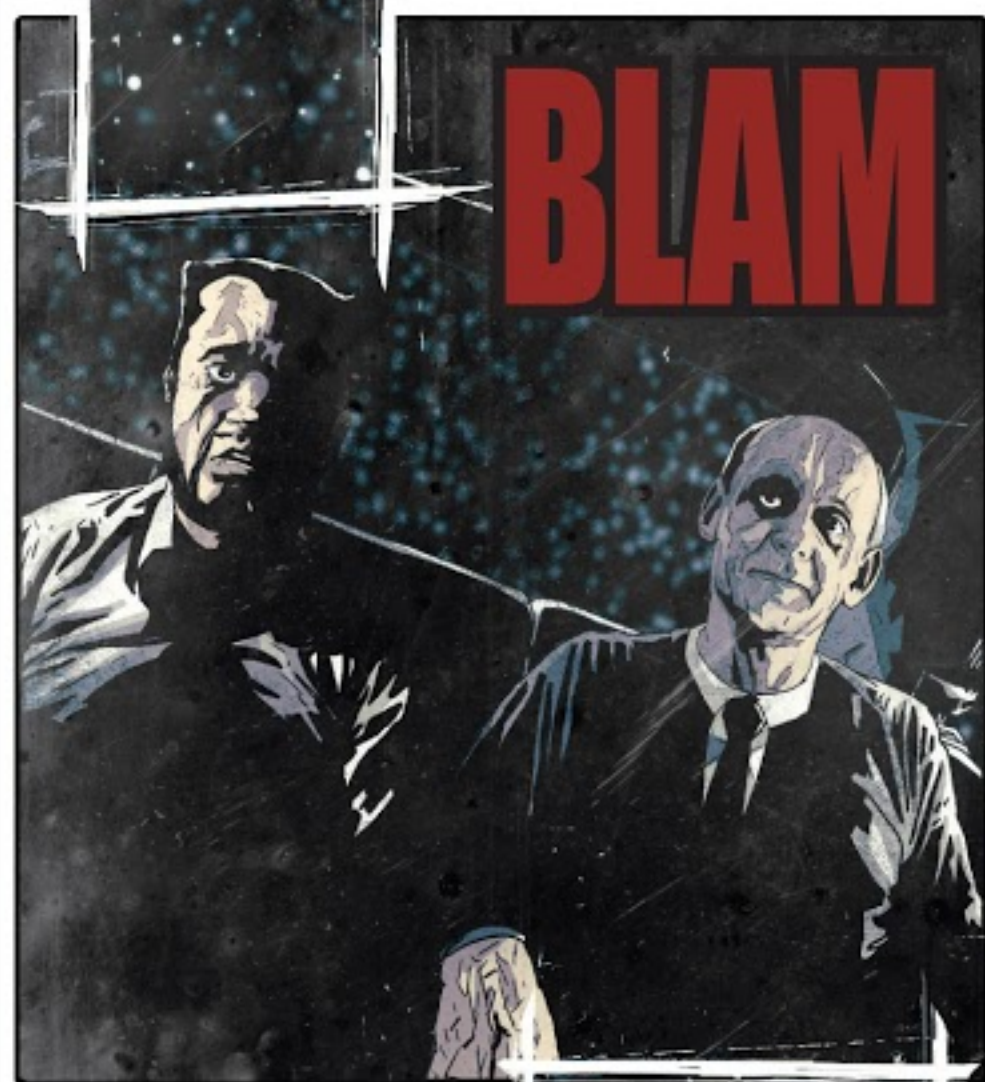
IT'S AMAZING WHAT A FEW THOUSAND DOLLARS IN DONATIONS WILL BUY YOU.

WE TURN THEIR POLITICAL AMBITIONS INTO OUR OPERATIONAL GOALS.

THEN WE WON'T HAVE TO PUT UP WITH HEAVEN'S B.S. IN THE FUTURE.









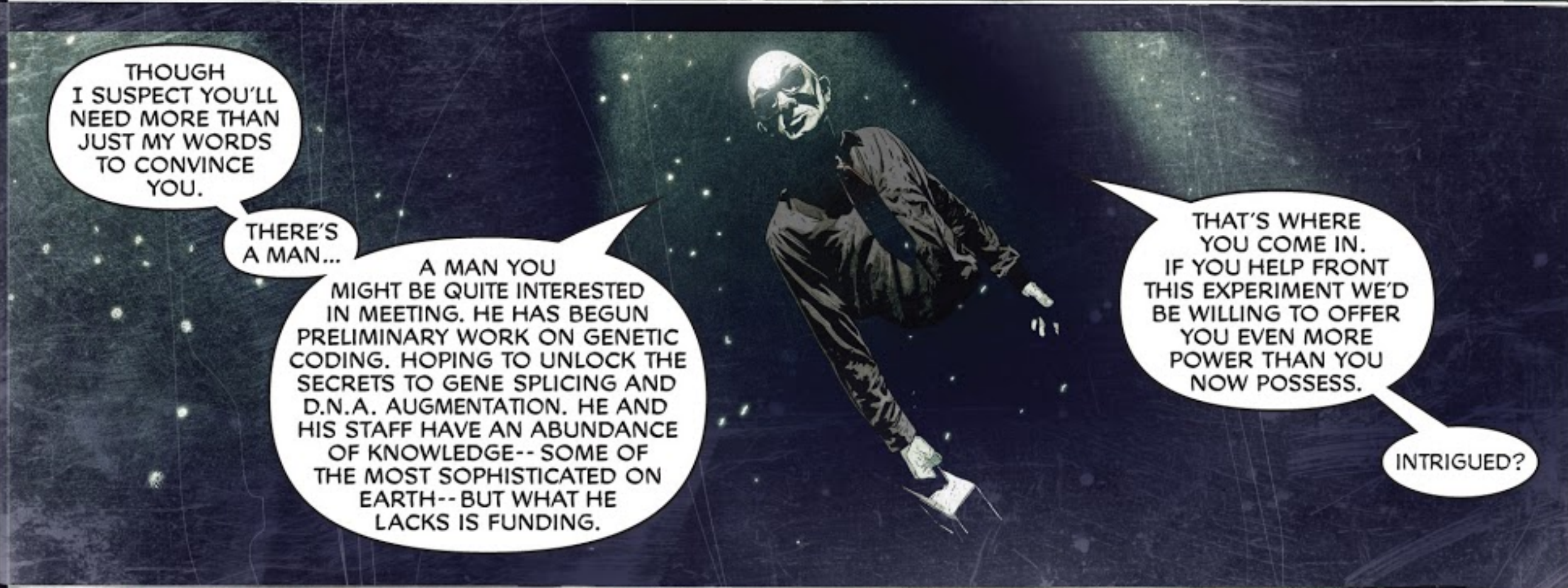


YOU
WANT TO CHAT?
SHOW YOURSELF
FIRST!



WHO THE
F*CK ARE
YOU?

A POSSIBLE
FRIEND--
ONE WILLING TO
JOIN YOU IN
YOUR CAUSE.



THOUGH
I SUSPECT YOU'LL
NEED MORE THAN
JUST MY WORDS
TO CONVINCE
YOU.

THERE'S
A MAN...

A MAN YOU
MIGHT BE QUITE INTERESTED
IN MEETING. HE HAS BEGUN
PRELIMINARY WORK ON GENETIC
CODING. HOPING TO UNLOCK THE
SECRETS TO GENE SPLICING AND
D.N.A. AUGMENTATION. HE AND
HIS STAFF HAVE AN ABUNDANCE
OF KNOWLEDGE-- SOME OF
THE MOST SOPHISTICATED ON
EARTH-- BUT WHAT HE
LACKS IS FUNDING.

THAT'S WHERE
YOU COME IN.
IF YOU HELP FRONT
THIS EXPERIMENT WE'D
BE WILLING TO OFFER
YOU EVEN MORE
POWER THAN YOU
NOW POSSESS.

INTRIGUED?

**BAM
BAM
BAM
BAM**

COME NOW,
MR. WYNN, DON'T
LOOK SO SURPRISED.
SURELY YOU CAN'T BE
SO NAÏVE AS TO NOT
BE PREPARED FOR
MOMENTS LIKE
THIS.

THIS CASE
I'M HOLDING
CONTAINS ALL THE
INFORMATION
YOU'LL NEED.

SIR, WE
NEED TO
LEAVE!

BUT I'M UNDER
STRICT ORDERS TO
DELIVER THIS 'GIFT' TO YOU
ONLY. BECAUSE MR. HAGGERTY
HAS BECOME CORRUPTED--
WILLING TO JUMP SIDES WITH-
OUT BEING BRIBED. HIS TYPE
CAN'T BE TRUSTED.

THIS IS
BULLSHIT!
DON'T LISTEN
TO HIM,
JASON!

YOU, ON THE
OTHER HAND,
MR. WYNN, WERE
NEVER FULLY ON
HEAVEN'S SIDE TO
BEGIN WITH.



SO THIS ISN'T
ABOUT WHAT WE
WANT OR WHAT THEY
WANT. IT IS SIMPLY A
MATTER OF WHAT
YOU WANT.

JASON!
LET'S GO!
NOW!... BEFORE
HE SPEWS
MORE LIES TO
YOU.



MR. HAGGERTY
SEEMS AFRAID
OF THE TRUTH.



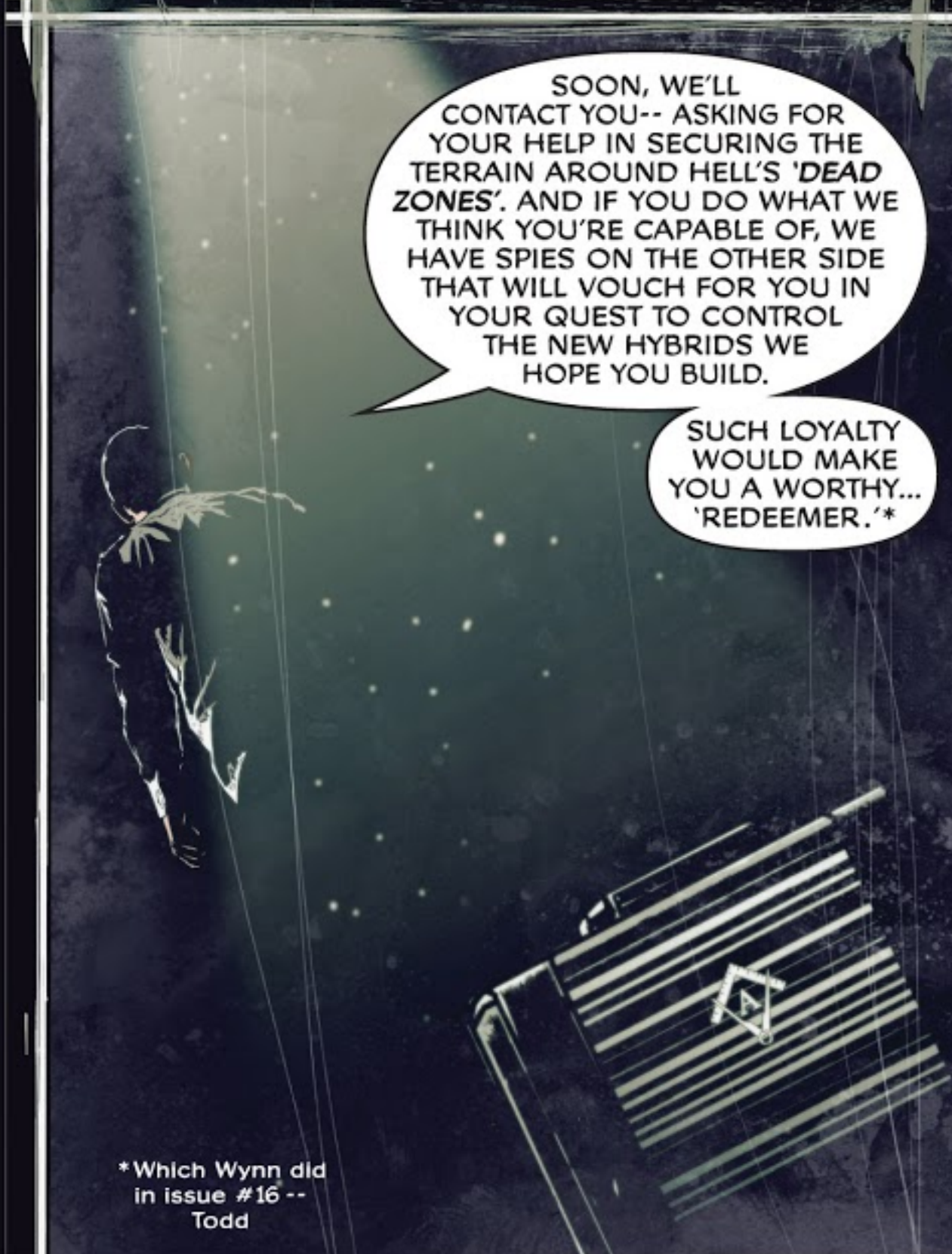
YOUR
MOVE, MR.
WYNN.

YOU LYING
BASTARD!



HERE...
THIS IS
YOURS
NOW.

USE
WHAT'S
INSIDE
WISELY.



SOON, WE'LL
CONTACT YOU-- ASKING FOR
YOUR HELP IN SECURING THE
TERRAIN AROUND HELL'S 'DEAD
ZONES'. AND IF YOU DO WHAT WE
THINK YOU'RE CAPABLE OF, WE
HAVE SPIES ON THE OTHER SIDE
THAT WILL VOUCH FOR YOU IN
YOUR QUEST TO CONTROL
THE NEW HYBRIDS WE
HOPE YOU BUILD.

SUCH LOYALTY
WOULD MAKE
YOU A WORTHY...
'REDEEMER.'*



AND THAT
IS JUST THE
BEGINNING OF
WHAT WE CAN
OFFER YOU.

*Which Wynn did
in issue #16 --
Todd



THAT WAS IT. THAT WAS HOW I CAME TO BE YOUR PARTNER. BECAUSE LIKE EVERYTHING ELSE IN THE WORLD-- YOUR **'PROJECT'** COULD SERVE A GREATER MISSION. SO I NEEDED TO USE WHAT YOU HAD.



AND ALONG THE WAY I BUILT A SECRET EMPIRE THAT GRADUALLY ASSERTED ITS INFLUENCE IN ALMOST ALL ASPECTS OF U.S. GOVERNMENT. FROM LOCAL MAYORS ALL THE WAY TO THE TOP. WE EVEN HAD A HAND IN THE SELECTION OF SOME KEY UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT APPOINTEES, SO THAT WHEN THE CASE OF **"CITIZENS UNITED"** CAME BEFORE THEM, WE ALREADY KNEW THEY'D VOTE TO ALLOW **UNLIMITED FUNDS** TO BE DONATED ANONYMOUSLY.

THAT MADE MY JOB EVEN EASIER.



FROM THERE IT WAS JUST A MATTER OF LETTING YOU AND YOUR COMPANY THINK YOU WERE THE ONES STEERING THE AGENDAS. WHEN IT WAS REALLY THE OPPOSITE. NEAR THE END I HAD MOST OF THE SCIENCE I WANTED BUT YOU STILL NEEDED MY MONEY.



THAT'S WHY YOUR COMPANY BECAME SO INDEBTED TO US.



BULLSHIT!

THEN WHY SHUT IT DOWN? THAT WAS **YOUR CALL**, NOT MINE!



I HAD **NO CHOICE!**

NOT AFTER I FOUND OUT YOU HAD SOME WEIRD CONNECTION WITH MY GREATEST SUCCESS. A LINK YOU DIDN'T EVEN KNOW ABOUT! **YOU HAD TO BE STOPPED!!**





AND I
THOUGHT
I DID.

BUT HERE
WE ARE.
OBVIOUSLY,
I DIDN'T DO
MY JOB.



SO I
WANT
WHAT'S
MINE.

I CREATED
SPAWN... NOT YOU!
I HELPED BRING HIS
POWERS TO EARTH, BUT
NOW YOU'VE STOLEN
THEM FROM ME. I'M
ABOUT TO STEAL
THEM BACK.

YOU'RE
MAD.



PERHAPS.



THOUGH
IN THE END
I'LL GET THEM
BOTH.



YOU SEE... THAT
COSTUME YOU'RE
WEARING-- YOU'RE
GOING TO GIVE
IT TO ME.
THEN MORE
IMPORTANTLY...



...YOU'RE
GOING TO BRING
AL SIMMONS
BACK!

NEXT ISSUE:
DEATH IS IN THE **AIR**



FINALE: SPAWN'S NEW ORIGIN

image

Special 227th Anniversary Issue

SPAWN

DIGITAL
EDITION

227
JAN

APPROVED
BY THE
IMAGE
COMICS





"I WAS SO CLOSE..."



"AFTER YEARS OF SEARCHING. SCOURING THOUSANDS OF FILES-- HE FINALLY APPEARED."



"MY STAFF-- THEY COULDN'T SEE IT. THEY SAID HE WASN'T ANY DIFFERENT FROM HUNDREDS OF OTHERS WE INTERVIEWED BEFORE HIM."



"IT WASN'T WHAT HE SAID. OR THE WAY HE ACTED. IT WAS *HIS EYES*. EVERYTHING I NEEDED TO KNOW WAS THERE WITH THE SOULLESS LOOK HE FIRST GAVE ME."



"GOD-- HE WAS PERFECT!"

"BUT I KNEW... THE MOMENT HE WALKED IN THE ROOM."



"HE HAD DEVOTION. STRENGTH. AND COMPLETE AND UTTER *INDIFFERENCE* TO THE VIOLENCE HE INFLICTED."



IT WAS
MAGNIFICENT!

HE ALWAYS
HAD A CLEAR
VISION OF WHAT HE
WAS DOING-- LIKE AN
ARTIST PAINTING A
MASTERPIECE.

THAT'S
WHY I CHOSE
HIM. I KNEW THIS
RARE FIND COULD
EVENTUALLY MEET
HELL'S NEEDS.



LIEUTENANT COLONEL
AL SIMMONS.

THAT WAS HIS NAME.
TEN TIMES THE MAN
YOU'LL EVER BE!



SO WE GROOMED
HIM, MARKING HIM AS THE
PRIME CANDIDATE FOR 'THE
PROJECT.' HE WAS TO BE THE PRIZE
PATIENT YOU'D SOME DAY CONVERT
INTO AN ULTIMATE *HYBRID*--
WHO'D BE NEITHER MAN NOR
MONSTER-- BUT A PERFECT
BLEND OF BOTH.

AND WITH
HIS DELIVERY
TO HELL I WOULD
BE GIVEN ALL THE
JUST REWARDS
I'D BEEN
PROMISED.



YEAH?
THEN WHY
AM I
WEARING HIS
COSTUME?

IT'S NOT A
COSTUME. IT'S
ARMOR.



LIVING
ARMOR.
AN
IMPORTANT
DISTINCTION
YOU'VE YET TO
LEARN. MEANING
THE SYMBIOTE NOW
CONTROLS YOU--
YOUR EXISTENCE AS
JIM DOWNING IS
A COMPLETE
FRAUD!



YOU'RE
JUST
A CATALYST
FOR THE
ARMOR!



SHINK

SHINK

EITHER
WAY... YOUR
BOY SIMMONS
IS DEAD. I'M
NOT!

YOU IDIOT!

DON'T YOU GET IT?
HE WAS THE ONE YOU
WANTED!! WHAT YOUR
EXPERIMENTS WERE ABOUT!
YOU WERE SO GODDAMN
SELF-ABSORBED-- TRYING
TO ALTER YOUR PATIENTS'
D.N.A.-- THAT YOU NEVER
THOUGHT THAT MAYBE,
JUST MAYBE, SOME OF
THAT D.N.A. WAS
ALREADY THERE!



"YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO SPLICE ANY
GENES OR HAVE YOUR STAFF DISSECT
EVERY POSSIBILITY... BECAUSE HE
ALREADY HAD IT IN HIM!



"BUT WE NEVER GOT TO HIM!
BECAUSE YOU F*CKED EVERYTHING
UP BEFORE THAT. YOUR F*CKING
DELUSIONS AND PARANOIA-- IT
RUINED IT FOR ALL OF US! I DIDN'T
SHUT US DOWN, THE WHITE HOUSE
DID! **BECAUSE OF YOU!**



"YOU DIDN'T
DELIVER!"

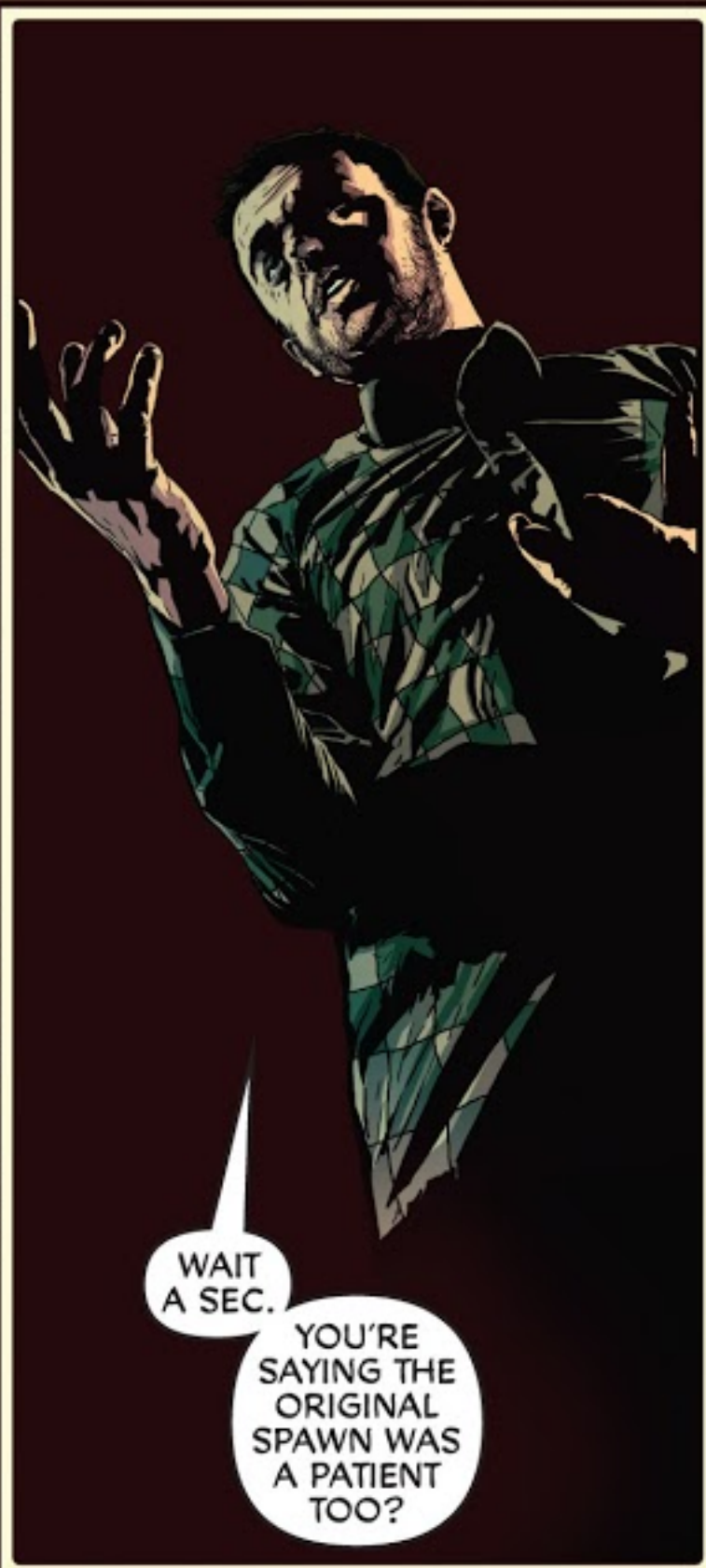
"AND WE HAD HIM!!
SIMMONS WAS READY TO
GO BEFORE YOU SHIT ON
EVERYTHING! HE WAS
SUPPOSED TO BE YOUR
LAST PATIENT!"



HE WAS
NUMBER
47!!

YOU
UNDERSTAND
THAT?... SIMMONS
WAS SUPPOSED TO
BE PATIENT 47!
NOT YOU!!





WAIT
A SEC.

YOU'RE
SAYING THE
ORIGINAL
SPAWN WAS
A PATIENT
TOO?



NO!

WEREN'T
YOU LISTENING?
WE *DIDN'T* GET
TO HIM!

AND
WHAT MADE
SIMMONS
DIFFERENT?



KRAMER'S
MADNESS CUT
OFF OUR
FUNDING...

THAT
WASN'T MY
QUESTION.



THUD



WHAT... MADE
SIMMONS... SO
DIFFERENT?

EVERYTHING!



AT LEAST THE THINGS THAT MATTERED. 'THE PROJECT' WAS MEANT TO BUILD THE ULTIMATE WEAPON. THE HUMAN HYBRID. THAT MEANS IT WAS MEANT FOR KILLERS. SOLDIERS. HUNTERS. WARRIORS.



AND SADLY, RICHARD, NEITHER YOU NOR KRAMER QUALIFIED FOR ANY OF THOSE.



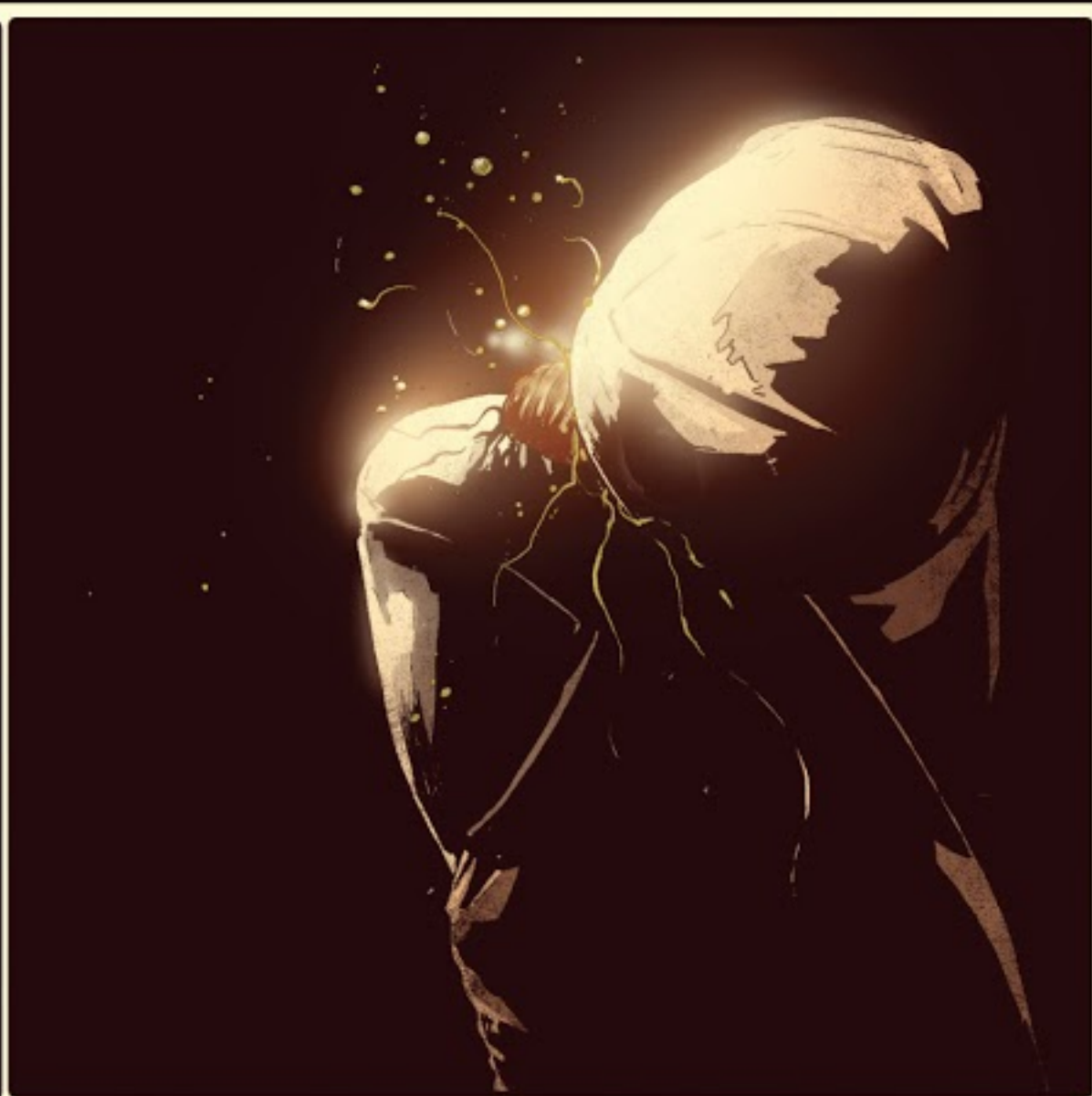
HELL, DIRECTOR KRAMER HERE EVEN STOOD BY WHILE WE MURDERED HIS LOVELY WIFE.



"THAT'S BECAUSE 'THE PROJECT' WASN'T MEANT TO EXPERIMENT ON SCIENTISTS OR BUSINESSMEN. WE LEARNED TOO LATE, IT WAS BUILT FOR MEN LIKE SIMMONS."



EVERYONE ELSE-- YOURSELF INCLUDED-- WERE NEVER WIRED PROPERLY. THAT MADE ALL OF YOU UNPREDICTABLE. AND ALSO... EXPENDABLE.





SO ME BECOMING 'TREMOR' WAS JUST PART OF THE PROCESS?

AND WHETHER WE LIVED OR DIED WAS IRRELEVANT?
YES.

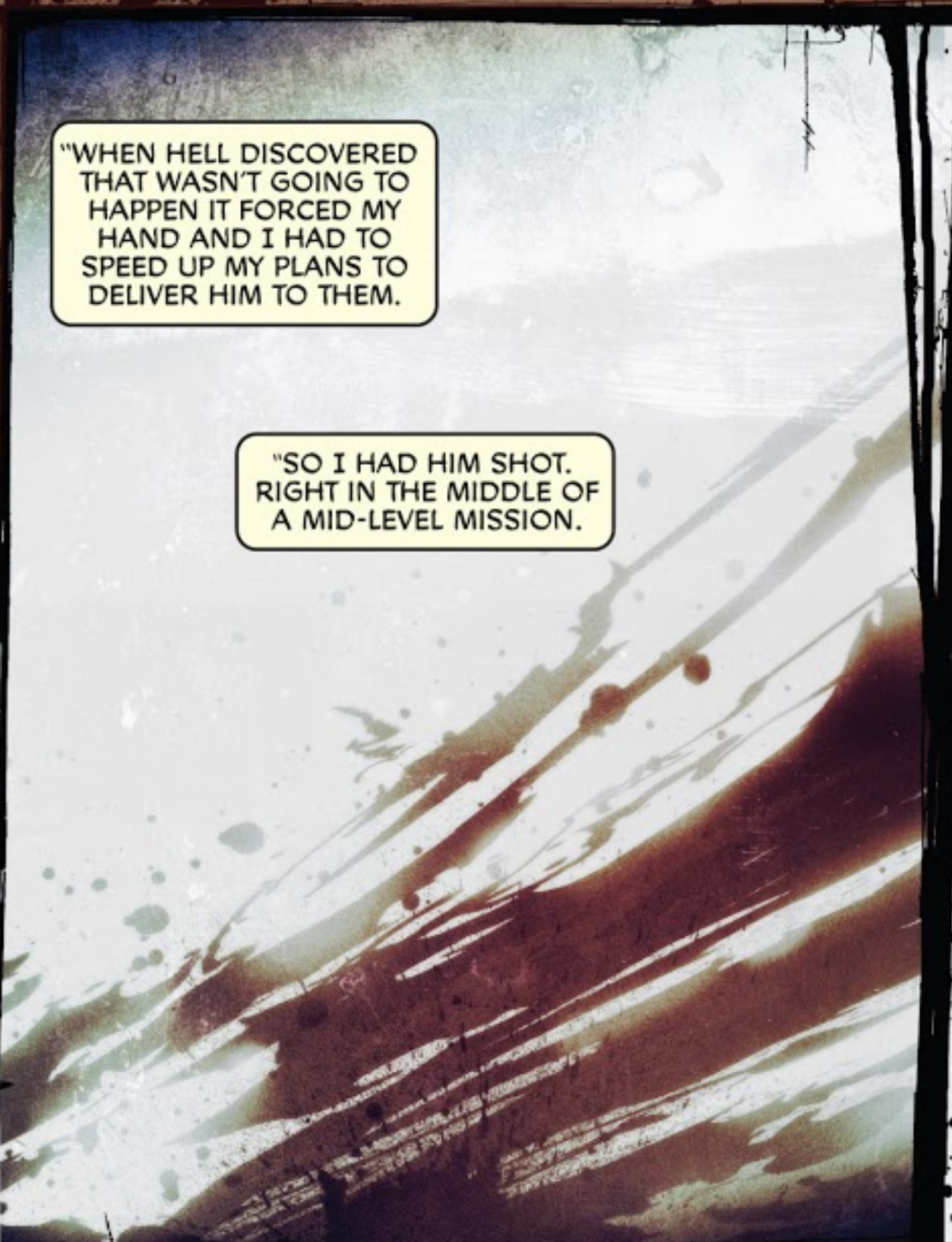


"ESSENTIALLY. WHAT MATTERED WAS THAT THE **RIGHT PERSON** NEEDED TO DIE. THAT WAS SIMMONS.



BUT KRAMER CONTAMINATED EVERYTHING WHEN HE EXPERIMENTED ON HIMSELF.

SIMMONS WAS GOING TO DIE. THERE WASN'T A QUESTION ABOUT THAT. BUT HE WAS SUPPOSED TO DIE **AFTER** WE EXPERIMENTED ON HIM. AND **AFTER** WE MADE HIM INTO THE PERFECT WARRIOR.



"WHEN HELL DISCOVERED THAT WASN'T GOING TO HAPPEN IT FORCED MY HAND AND I HAD TO SPEED UP MY PLANS TO DELIVER HIM TO THEM.

"SO I HAD HIM SHOT. RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF A MID-LEVEL MISSION.



"I PROMISED HELL THEY'D GET THEIR WARRIOR-- AND UNLIKE OTHERS IN THIS ROOM-- I DELIVER ON MY PROMISES."



BUT THE
DEMONS...
THEY WEREN'T
AMUSED.



GIVING THEM
SIMMONS THE WAY I
DID-- BEFORE HE'D BEEN
EXPERIMENTED ON-- WAS LIKE
GIVING THEM A PREMATURE BABY
RIPPED FROM THE WOMB. HE
WASN'T FULLY FORMED YET. HE
NEEDED TO GROW INTO WHAT
THEY WANTED. SO THEY
SENT HIM BACK.



I GAVE THEM
THE SACRIFICE THEY
AGREED TO... BUT THEY
REJECTED HIM!
SAID HE NEEDED MORE
TRAINING. MORE
POWER!



"THEY REJECTED HIM
BECAUSE YOU
COULDN'T WAIT!"



BUT IT
TOOK THEM
FIVE YEARS TO
DECIDE THAT! FIVE
LONG YEARS
BEFORE I SAW
HIM AGAIN.



SO WHAT?
YOU REBUILT YOUR
POLITICAL POWER
BASE. AND IT'S
NOT LIKE SIMMONS
KILLED YOU.

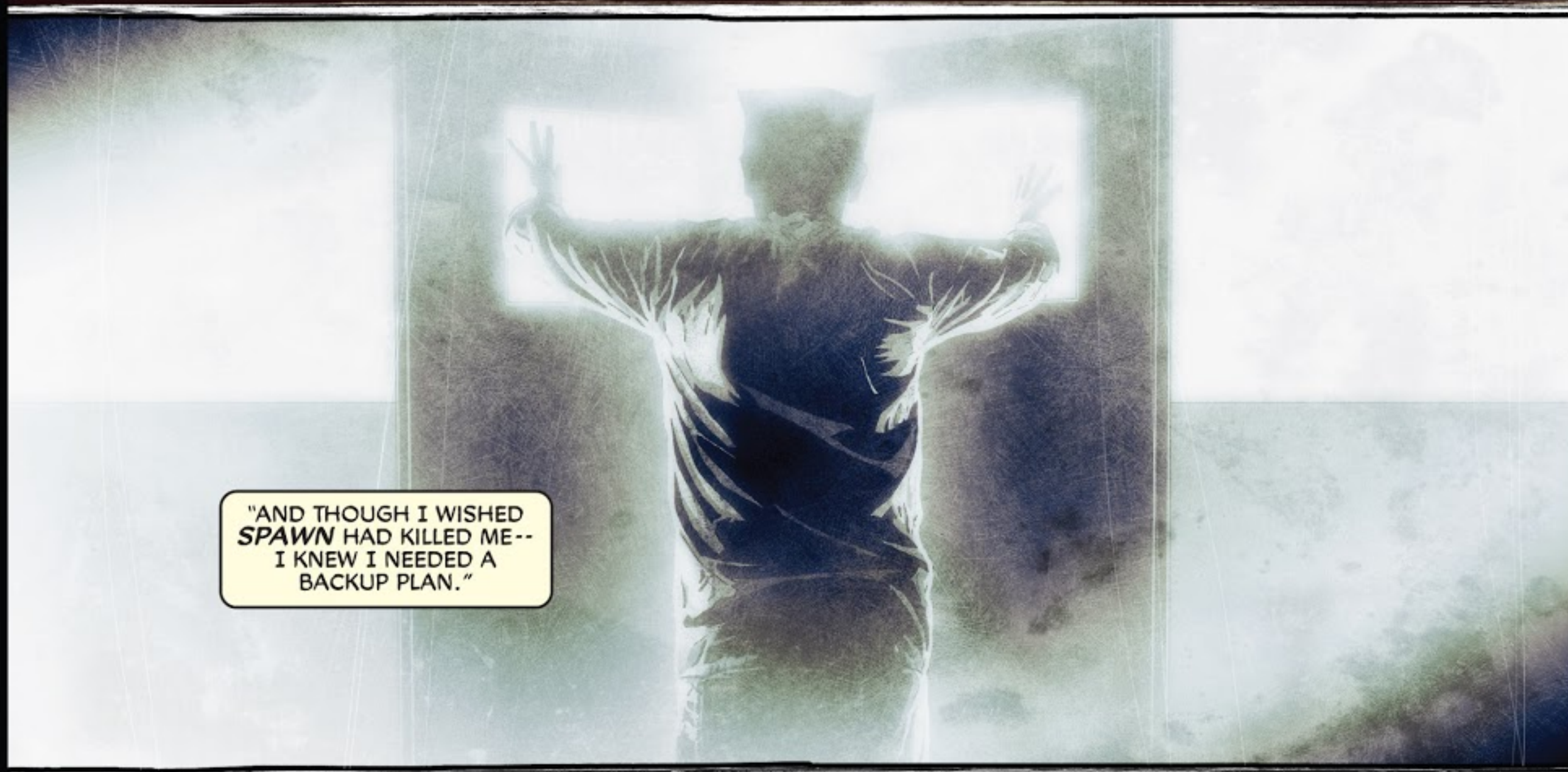
YOU KNOW
WHAT I GOT OUT
OF THE DEAL-- WHAT
HELL GAVE ME FOR
MY EFFORT OF FINDING
THEM A HUMAN
WARRIOR TO BATTLE
HEAVEN?



NOTHING.



ALL THOSE
YEARS WORKING
FOR MY BIG PAYOFF... IT
ALL VANISHED BECAUSE I
DIDN'T GIVE THEM A *PERFECT
SPAWN!* BY KILLING
SIMMONS TOO SOON--
THEY RETRACTED *EVERY*
PROMISE EVER MADE
TO ME.



"AND THOUGH I WISHED
SPAWN HAD KILLED ME--
I KNEW I NEEDED A
BACKUP PLAN."

"THAT CAME WHEN I HEARD THAT YOU'D EXPERIMENTED ON YOURSELF AWAY FROM EVERYONE ELSE AND THOUGH IT DIDN'T SURPRISE ME THAT YOU'D DO SOMETHING SO RECKLESS-- I NEEDED TO FIND OUT IF ANYTHING YOU DID TO YOURSELF MAY HAVE WORKED.



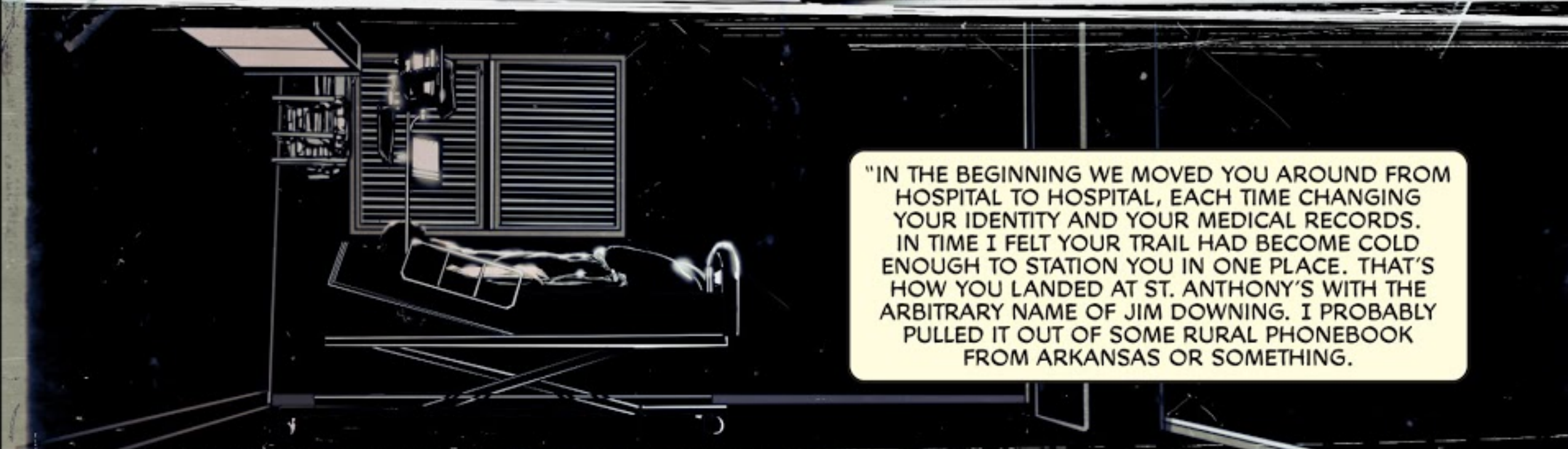
"BECAUSE THE THING THAT SCARED ME MOST WAS THE KNOWLEDGE THAT YOU AND SIMMONS SHARED SOME WEIRD COMMONALITIES IN YOUR BRAIN PATTERNS. SO I HAD YOU WATCHED. FOR YEARS WE MONITORED YOU AND THEN ONE DAY WE FOUND YOU IN A COMA.



"AND WHAT NO ONE ELSE KNOWS WAS THAT YOU SLIPPED INTO YOUR COMA THE SAME DAY HELL RETURNED SIMMONS BACK TO EARTH.



"IT WAS FAIRLY EASY FOR ME TO WHISK YOU AWAY FROM YOUR RECLUSIVE LIFE AND WATCH OVER YOU ALL THESE YEARS.



"IN THE BEGINNING WE MOVED YOU AROUND FROM HOSPITAL TO HOSPITAL, EACH TIME CHANGING YOUR IDENTITY AND YOUR MEDICAL RECORDS. IN TIME I FELT YOUR TRAIL HAD BECOME COLD ENOUGH TO STATION YOU IN ONE PLACE. THAT'S HOW YOU LANDED AT ST. ANTHONY'S WITH THE ARBITRARY NAME OF JIM DOWNING. I PROBABLY PULLED IT OUT OF SOME RURAL PHONEBOOK FROM ARKANSAS OR SOMETHING.



"BUT MY PURPOSE OF KEEPING YOU AROUND WAS THAT SOMEDAY I MIGHT NEED A 'BARGAINING CHIP' AGAINST HELL OR A PEACE OFFERING WITH HEAVEN."



BUT WITH
SIMMONS' RETURN MY
LIFE QUICKLY GOT COMPLICATED.
I HAD TO BUILD GLOBAL
RELATIONSHIPS AND MILITARY
STRENGTH OUTSIDE OF MY
NORMAL CHANNELS.

"I EVEN VENTURED INTO A PACT WITH
HEAVEN THAT TRANSFORMED ME INTO
WHAT I THOUGHT WOULD BE MY FINAL
DESTINY. BUT TRAITORS FROM BOTH
HEAVEN AND HELL SAW TO IT THAT MY
POWERS AS THE *REDEEMER* WOULDN'T
BE PERMANENT.

"I WAS STRIPPED DOWN
TO MY PHYSICAL CORE
AND PATCHED BACK
TOGETHER. BUT IT GAVE
ME A TASTE OF THE
AFTERLIFE AND WHAT IT
COULD BE LIKE. I'VE BEEN
TRYING TO GET BACK
THERE EVER SINCE.

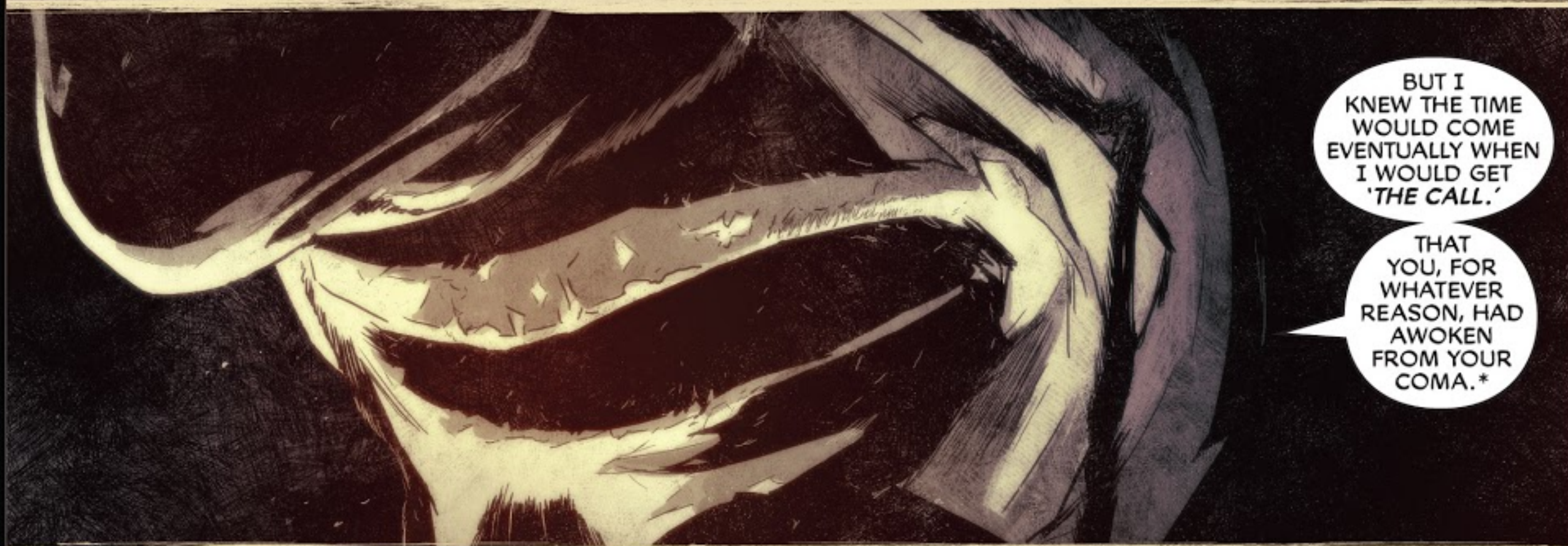
"ALL I NEEDED WAS *SPAWN'S*
HELP. YEAR AFTER YEAR I TRIED
TO GET HIS ASSISTANCE, BUT
HE'D CHANGED! CHANGED IN
A WAY THAT NO ONE COULD
MANIPULATE. NOT ME, HEAVEN
OR HELL, NOR EVEN HIS
ARMOR."



THAT'S WHAT
BEGAN MAKING YOU
SO IMPORTANT BECAUSE IF
SIMMONS WASN'T GOING
TO BECOME THE WARRIOR
WE WANTED-- YOU WERE
ALL I HAD LEFT.

AND ALL
THIS WENT
DOWN WITH-
OUT ANY
LEAKS?

MOSTLY.
EACH TIME WE MOVED
KRAMER I ELIMINATED
MOST OF THOSE INVOLVED
WITH HIS PRIOR IDENTITY.
AFTER A DOZEN MOVES
HIS TRAIL WAS NEARLY
UNTRACEABLE WITH ONLY
A FEW PEOPLE IN
THE KNOW.



BUT I
KNEW THE TIME
WOULD COME
EVENTUALLY WHEN
I WOULD GET
'THE CALL.'

THAT
YOU, FOR
WHATEVER
REASON, HAD
AWOKEN
FROM YOUR
COMA.*



*Which he did in issue 185-- Todd



SON!

THE AGENT
MAKING THE CALL
COMMITTED SUICIDE
SHORTLY AFTERWARDS,
SINCE HE KNEW WE'D
ELIMINATE HIM
ANYWAY.*

*Another mystery solved
from issue 185-- Todd



"MY CONCERN, THOUGH,
WAS TO IMMEDIATELY TEST
YOU. I HIRED ONE OF YOUR
FORMER STAFF MEMBERS
WHO SENT WAVE AFTER
WAVE OF PAST PATIENTS
AGAINST YOU.

"I'M SURE RICHARD,
HERE, PROBABLY GOT
A CALL OR TWO ASKING
HIM TO COME OUT OF
RETIREMENT.

"BUT NO MATTER WHAT
CAME YOUR WAY...
YOU CRUSHED IT."*

*Issues 185 to 196-- Todd



WHICH WAS
EXACTLY WHAT I
WAS HOPING FOR!
THAT YOU'D PROVE
YOURSELF WORTHY
OF THE '**SPAWN**'
MANTLE.

AND WITH
SIMMONS
GONE-- YOU'RE
NOW **MY NEW**
SECRET
WEAPON.





I JUST
NEEDED TO
MAKE SURE WE'D
MEET UNDER
**OPTIMUM
CONDITIONS.**
SINCE I NEED YOU
TO DO SOMETHING
VERY IMPORTANT
FOR ME.



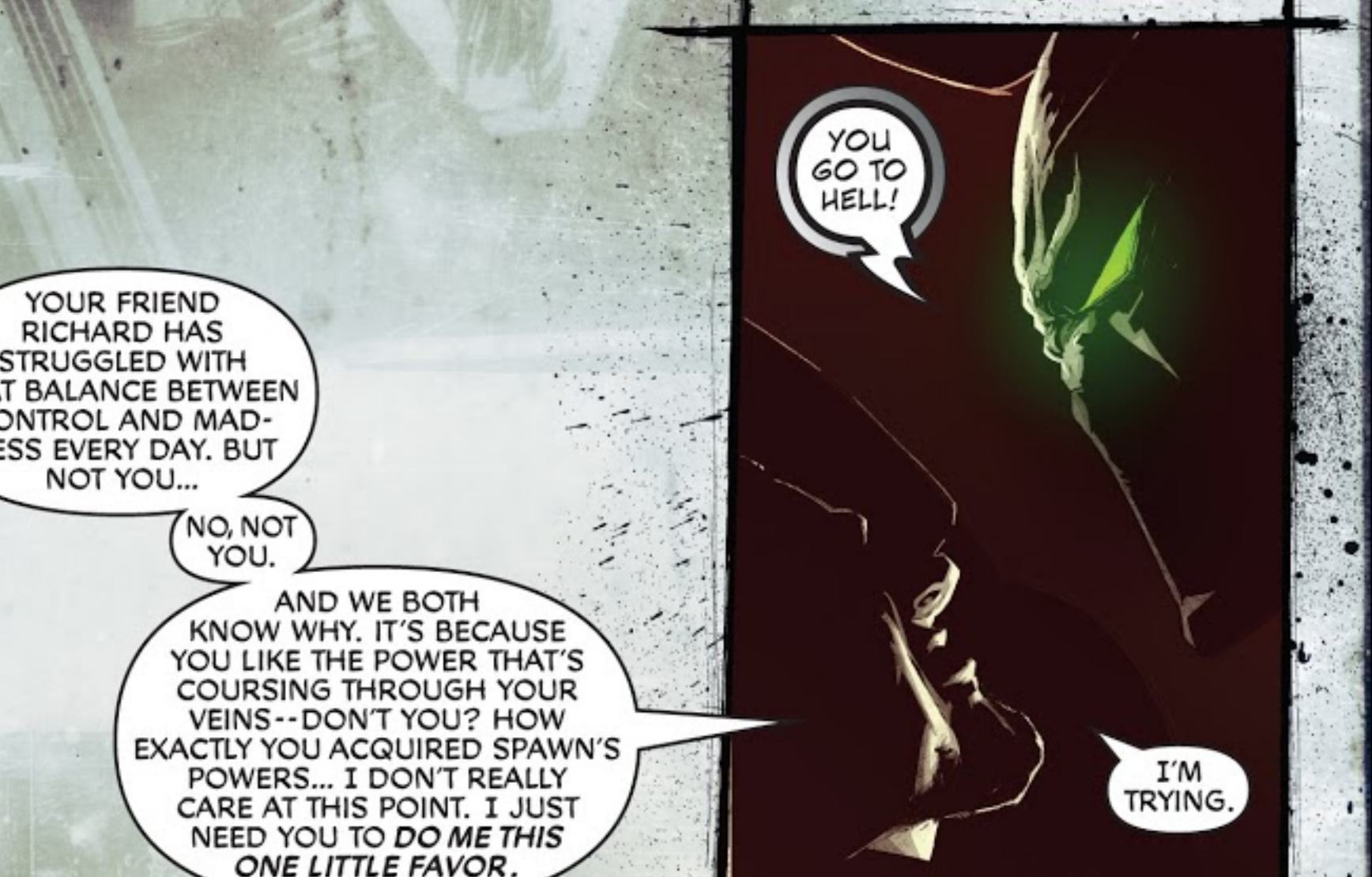
"SO ONCE YOU PASSED THE
PHYSICAL TESTS I THREW AT
YOU I NEEDED TO TEST YOUR
MENTAL MAKE-UP AS WELL.*

*Starting in issue 201--Todd



"THAT WAS GOING TO BE THE TRUE
BAROMETER. HOW BADLY DID YOU
WANT TO FIND YOUR PAST AND
HOW HARD WOULD YOU WORK
TOWARDS THAT GOAL? SEE, IT'S THE
HUMAN EMOTIONS THAT THE
ARMOR FEEDS OFF OF--AND IF YOU
WEREN'T STRONG ENOUGH PSYCHO-
LOGICALLY THE ARMOR YOU'RE
WEARING WOULD HAVE ALREADY
CONSUMED YOUR SANITY.

"BUT IT HASN'T."



YOUR FRIEND
RICHARD HAS
STRUGGLED WITH
THAT BALANCE BETWEEN
CONTROL AND MAD-
NESS EVERY DAY. BUT
NOT YOU...

NO, NOT
YOU.

AND WE BOTH
KNOW WHY. IT'S BECAUSE
YOU LIKE THE POWER THAT'S
COURSING THROUGH YOUR
VEINS--DON'T YOU? HOW
EXACTLY YOU ACQUIRED SPAWN'S
POWERS... I DON'T REALLY
CARE AT THIS POINT. I JUST
NEED YOU TO DO ME THIS
ONE LITTLE FAVOR.

YOU
GO TO
HELL!

I'M
TRYING.

SLIT

ASK
ME!

WHAT ARE
YOU AFRAID OF?
ASK ME WHAT I WANT!
YOU MIGHT BE
SURPRISED!

CHINK

CHINK

SNAP

HAHAHA
HEE HAAAA
HAHAAA

THAT'S IT!
USE YOUR
ANGER... YOUR...
RAGE...

JIM-- LOOK,
I KNOW YOU THINK
I BETRAYED YOU-- BUT
YOU'VE COME THIS FAR.
HE'S COMPLETELY MAD
BUT JUST SEE WHAT
HE WANTS.

I PLAN
TO...
ALONE.

I NEED YOU
TO GO. I DON'T
WANT TO SEE YOU
EVER AGAIN. IS
THAT CLEAR?

Sure...



Whatever.



SO...
WHAT IS
IT YOU
WANT?



YOU'RE
PATHETIC!

LOOK AT
YOU! YOU'RE NO
SIMMONS!!
AND YOU NEVER WILL BE!
HE AT LEAST HAD THE GUTS
TO PROTECT HIS WIFE. THAT'S
ALL HE CARED ABOUT! HE
WOULD *NEVER* HAVE LET
ME DO THAT TO HIS
WOMAN!



OH--YOU'VE
GOT IT WRONG--
YOU'RE NOT GETTING AWAY
WITH IT. I JUST HAVE ONE
LAST QUESTION FOR YOU...
**WHAT DO YOU
WANT?**



THE EASIEST
THING YOU
CAN IMAGINE. I
WANT YOU TO
KILL ME.



DON'T
F*CK WITH
ME!



NOW TELL ME--
**WHY DID YOU
WANT ME
HERE?**



I TOLD YOU!
I NEED YOU
TO KILL ME!!

IT'S THE ONLY
WAY TO GET BACK
WHAT I'VE LOST! HELL
MADE ME A DEAL. SAYING
IF I WANTED TO REDEEM
MYSELF FROM GIVING
THEM AN IMPERFECT
SIMMONS-- I NEEDED
TO SACRIFICE
MYSELF!

THEN I'D
GET WHAT THEY
PROMISED! BUT SPAWN
NEEDED TO KILL ME--
ANYONE ELSE AND I'D GET
NOTHING! THAT WAS HELL'S
RULE! NO MATTER HOW
HARD I SCREWED WITH
SIMMONS HE
NEVER DID IT!



SO YOU
MUST!



NOW
DO IT!
THAT'S AN
ORDER!

YOU'RE
GOING TO DIE...
BUT NOT THE
WAY *YOU*
WANT.

YOUR
ARMOR?!
WHAT
HAVE
YOU...

DONE
WITH IT? IT'S
GONE. I SENT
IT AWAY. IT'S
JUST ME... JIM
DOWNING.

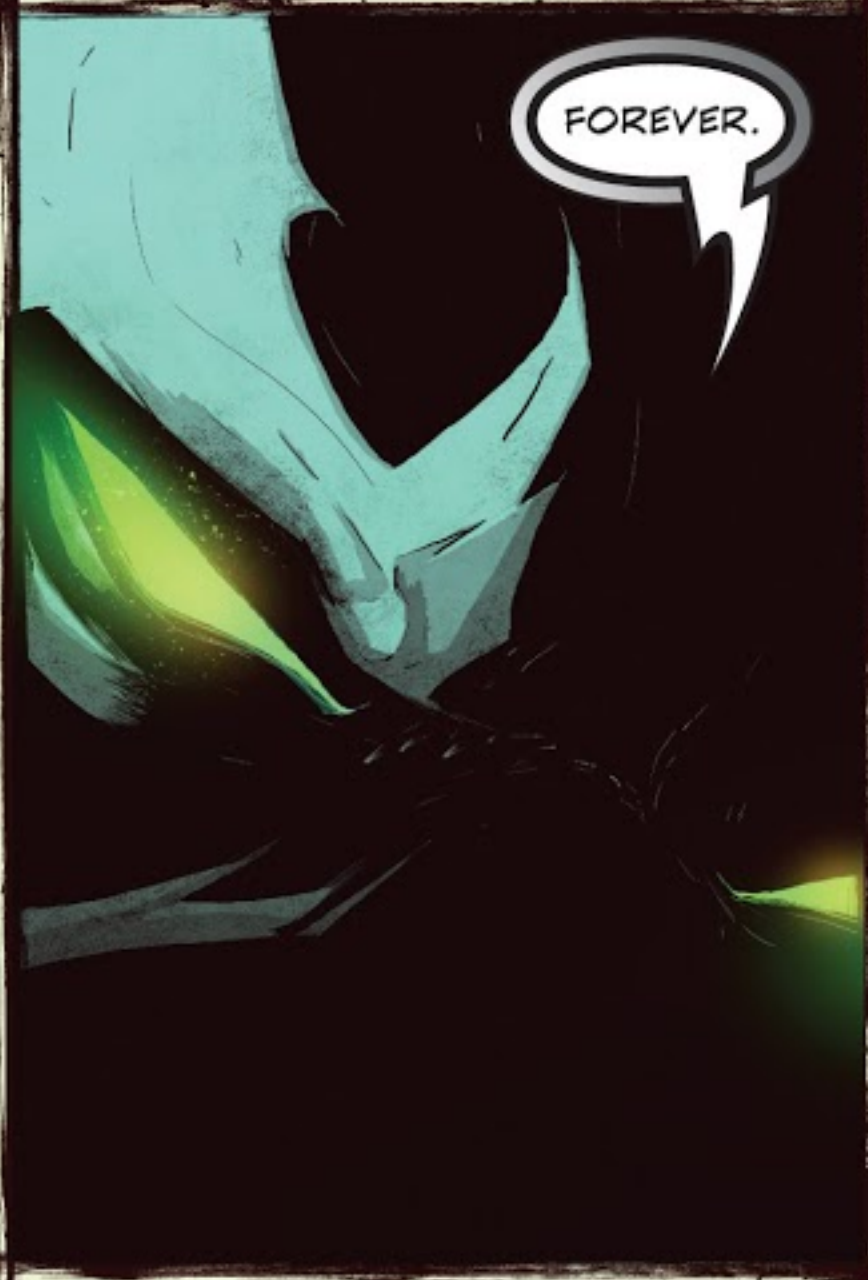
SPAWN'S
NOT KILLING
YOU TONIGHT.
I AM!

SO YOU'LL
BE DEAD AND
GET **NOTHING**
FROM HELL!

SNAP



IT'S
TIME TO
BURY MY
PAST.



FOREVER.



JESUS!

JIM...
WHAT'RE
YOU
DOING?



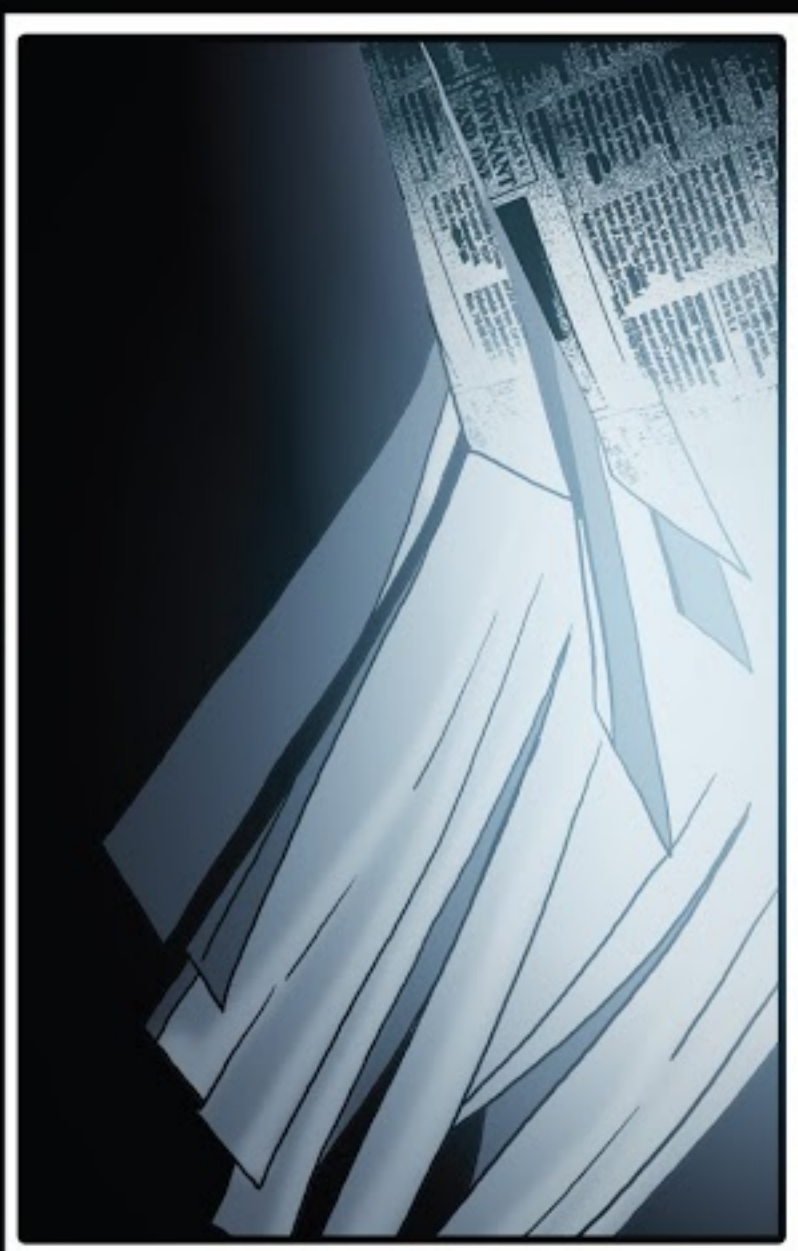


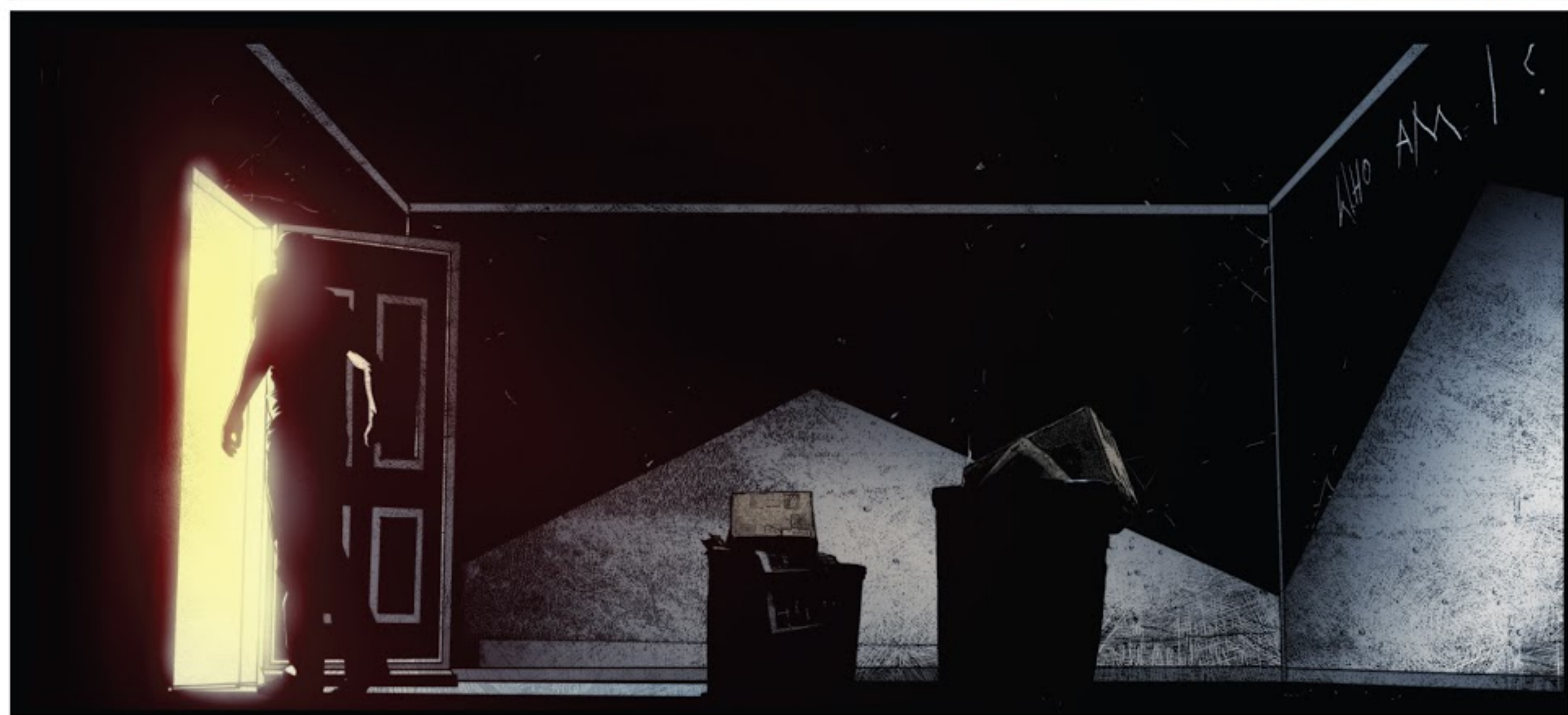
WHO

AM

??









No. 228

February, 2013

SPAWN

COMICS

DIGITAL
EDITION

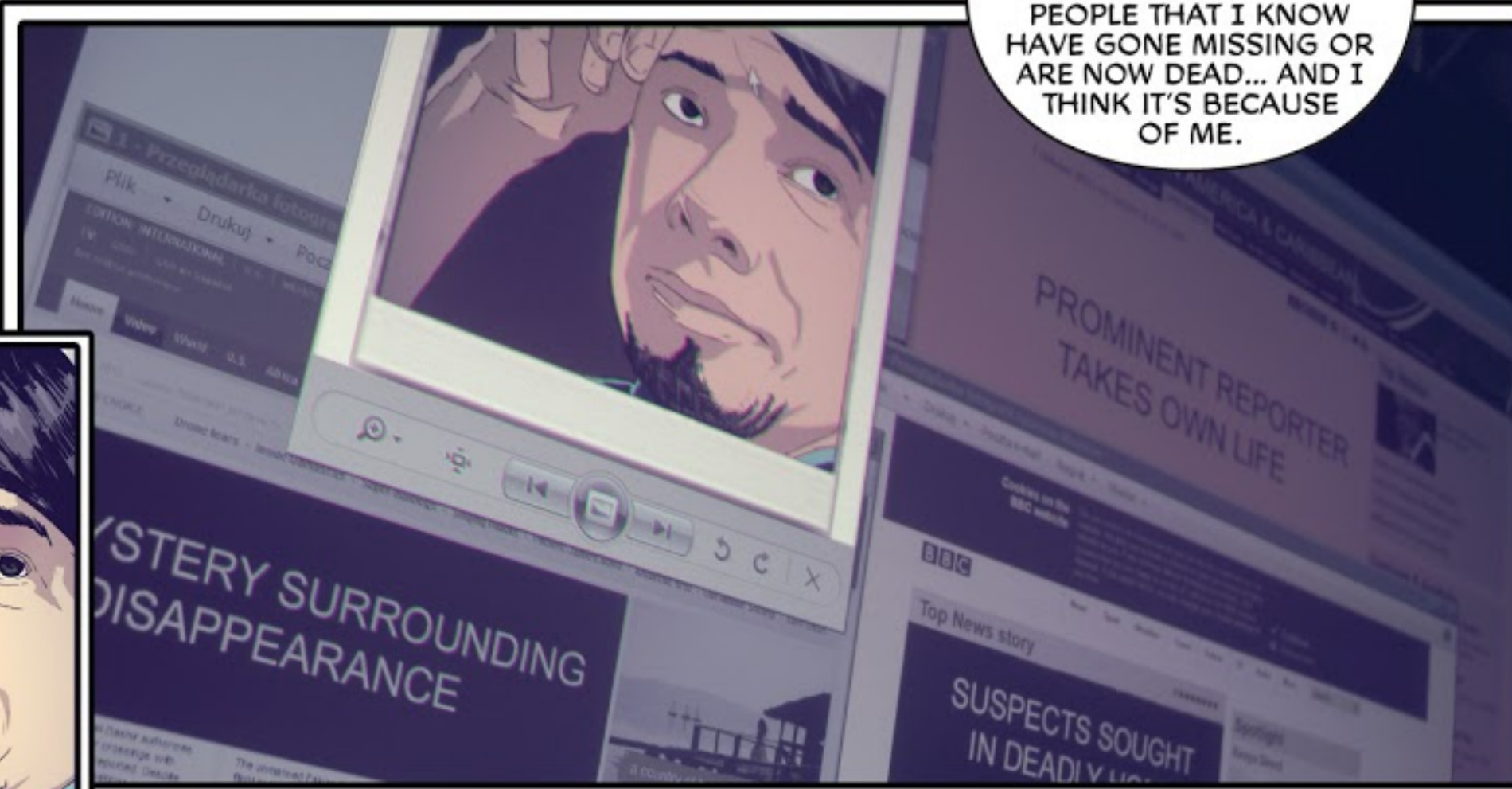




HELLO, MY NAME IS MARC ROSEN... AND I'M MAKING THIS RECORDING WITH THE HOPE THAT IF ANYTHING *HAPPENS TO ME*, SOMEONE WILL LISTEN TO THIS AND...

MORE THAN ANYTHING... I JUST HOPE THEY'LL BELIEVE ME... AND INVESTIGATE DEEPER INTO WHAT I BELIEVE IS A MULTI-LAYERED CONSPIRACY.

AND WITHOUT SOUNDING TOO CRAZY-- I HAVE **NO IDEA** WHO'S ORCHESTRATING ANY OF IT. BUT SOME PEOPLE THAT I KNOW HAVE GONE MISSING OR ARE NOW DEAD... AND I THINK IT'S BECAUSE OF ME.



AND IF YOU CHECK THE DATES-- EVERY ONE OF THEM VANISHED OR DIED DAYS AFTER I GAVE THEM A PHOTO.

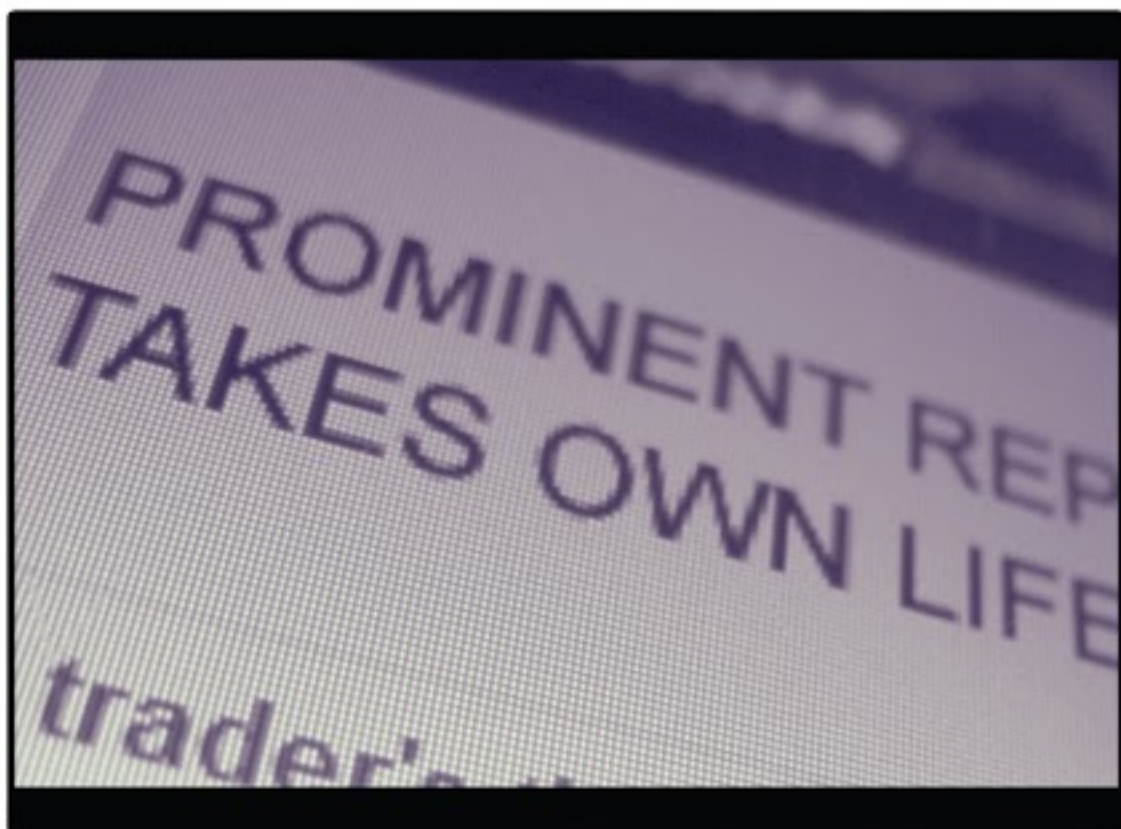
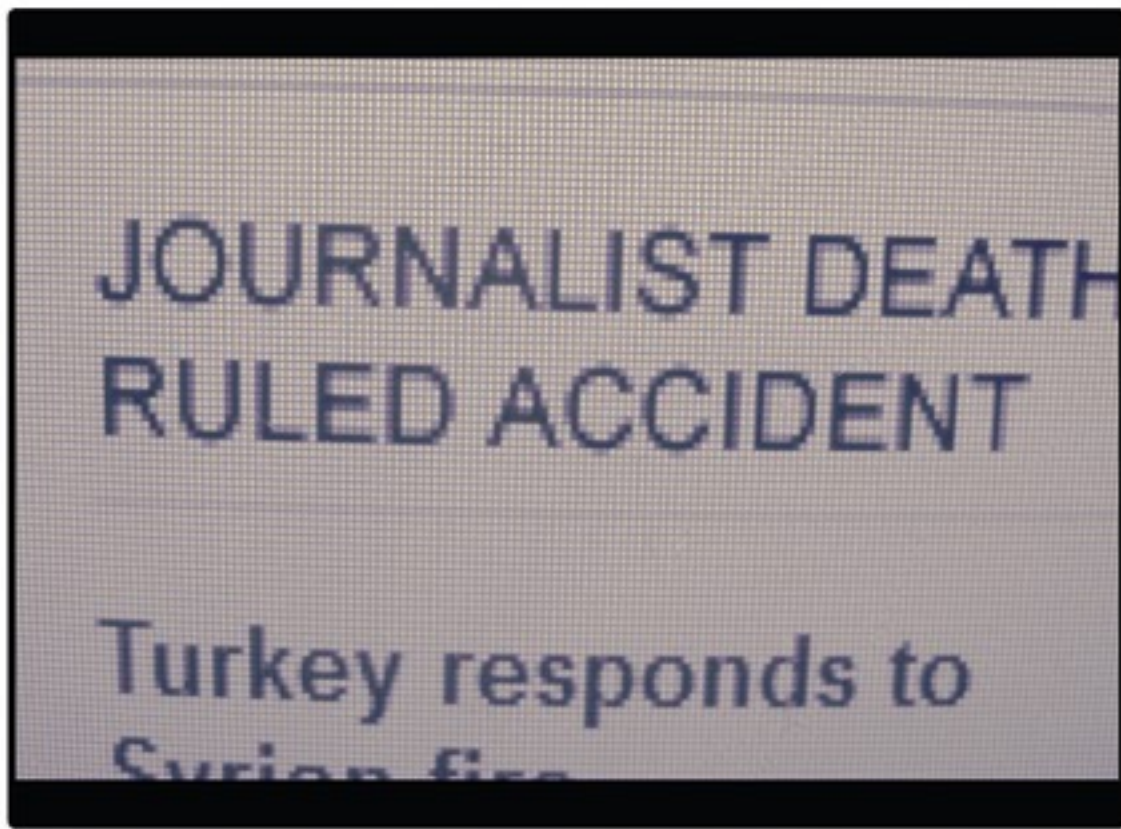
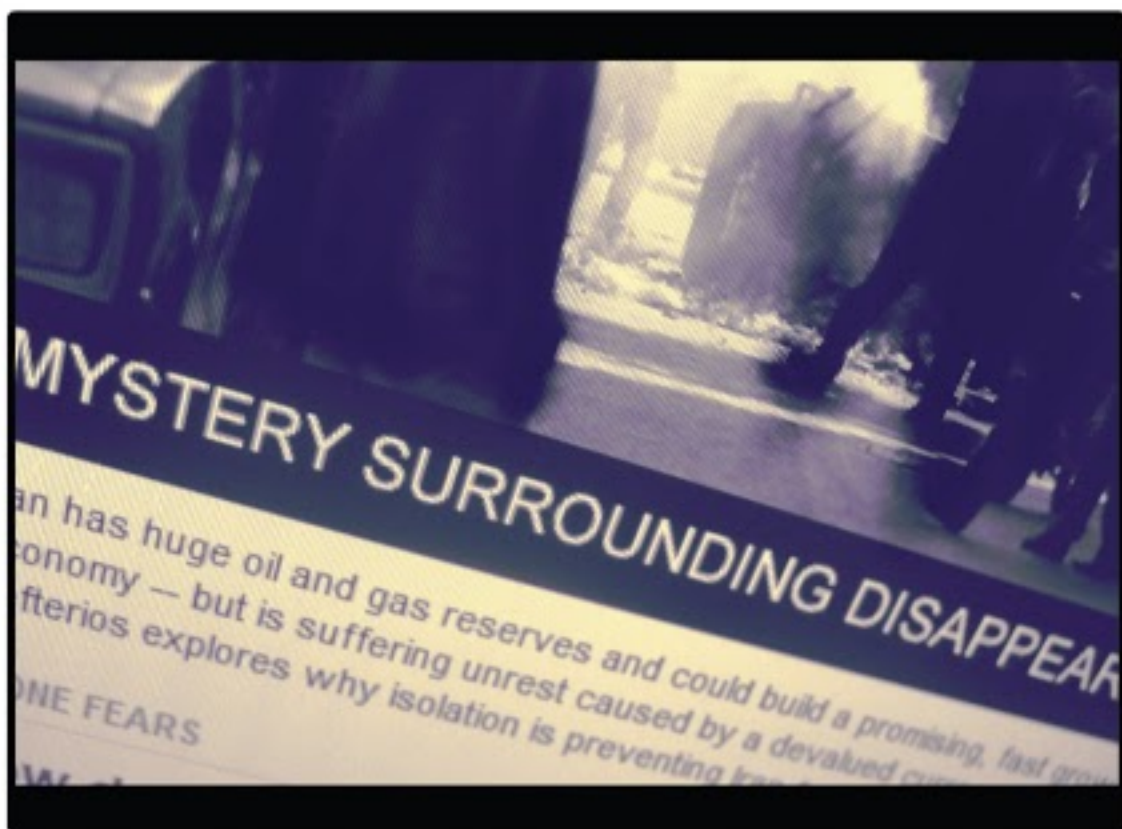


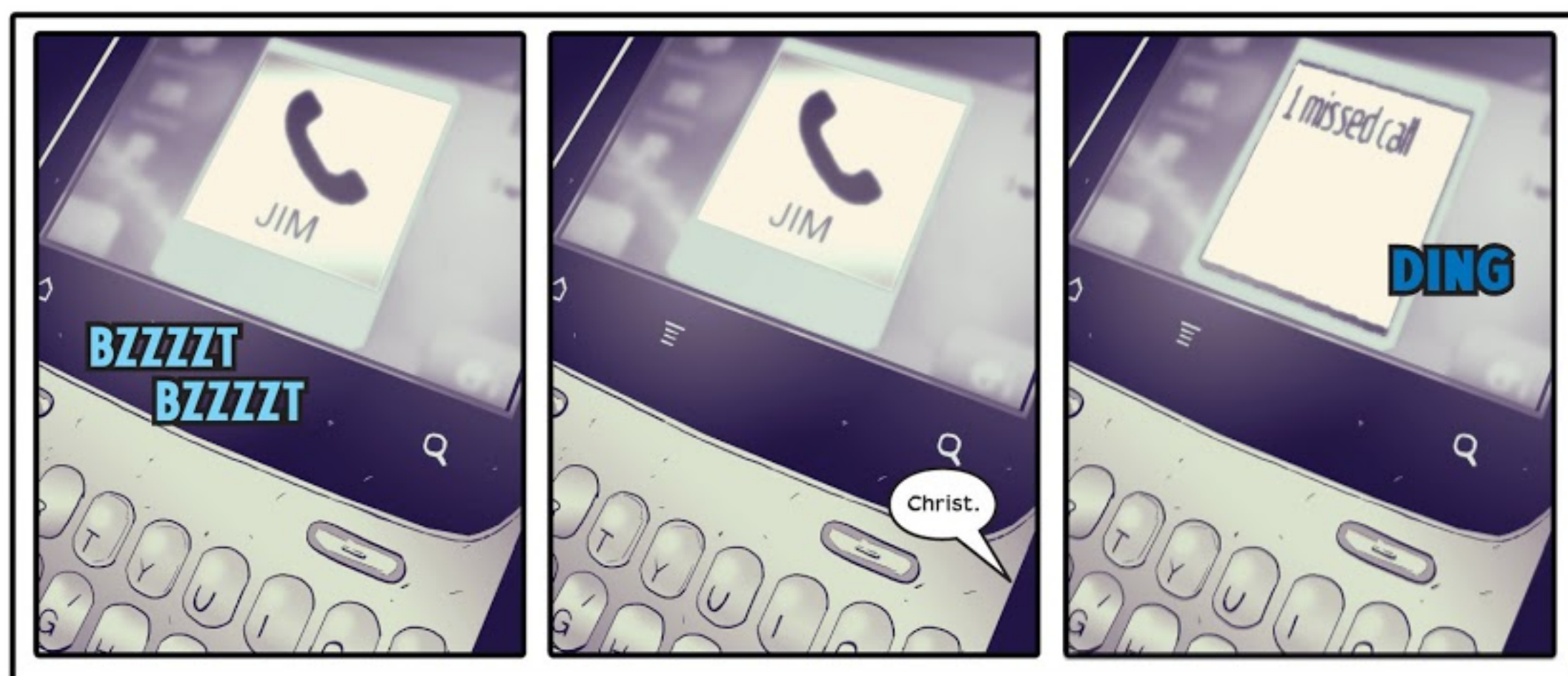
THIS PHOTO!

THE MAN IN IT IS JIM DOWNING, THE GUY I NOW WORK FOR. THE SAME GUY WHO'S BEEN ALL OVER THE INTERNET AND T.V.-- DOING SOME INCREDIBLE THINGS THAT NO ONE CAN EXPLAIN. THE WOMAN IS... I DON'T KNOW! I HAVEN'T A CLUE.

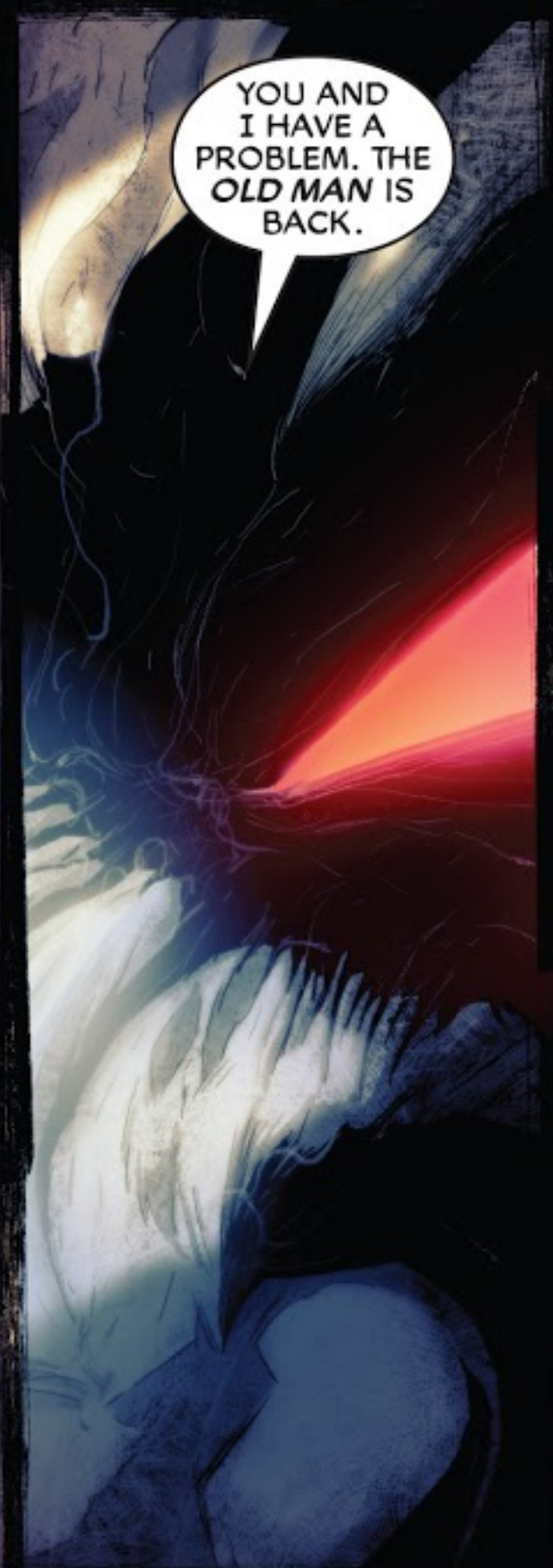
BUT **EVERY** JOURNALIST WHO RECEIVED THIS IMAGE... IS GONE!













WHY? I'VE NEVER
HAD A PROBLEM WITH HIM.
WE ALWAYS KNEW WHERE EACH
OTHER STOOD. THOUGH I GOT
THE FEELING COG WASN'T
TOO FOND OF YOU.

ARE YOU DEAF?!
I SAID **HE'S BACK!** THERE'S
ONLY ONE WAY HE COULD DO THAT--
HE HAD TO **ABDICATE** HIS THRONE!
NOW ASK YOURSELF... **WHY WOULD HE**
DO THAT UNLESS HIS POWERS HAVE
GROWN?! AND SINCE HE WAS A SPAWN
HIMSELF ONCE-- WHO DO YOU THINK
HAS THE INSIDE TRACK TO
CONVERT OUR SPAWN?!



LIKE I SAID.
HE'S NOT MY PROBLEM.
AND DOWNING, IN CASE
YOU HAVEN'T NOTICED,
DOESN'T BELONG TO
ANYONE YET.



SO
WE'RE ALL
COMPETITORS
NOW?



YES.



THAT YOU
THOUGHT OTHER-
WISE SHOWS HOW
UNDISCIPLINED
YOU STILL ARE.

THAT
TRAIT WILL
FAIL YOU
EVENTUALLY.

YOU'RE RIGHT.
I NEED TO BE
MORE LIKE YOU SO
I CAN HONE MY
POWERS AND
INFLUENCE.



THEN MAYBE...
JUST MAYBE I CAN
MAKE F*CKIN' **KEY**
CHAINS SOME
DAY TOO!



AND YOU ACTUALLY BELIEVE DOWNING IS CAPABLE OF DOING ALL THESE STUNTS I'VE BEEN WATCHING?



I DO. I'VE SEEN IT WITH MY OWN EYES.



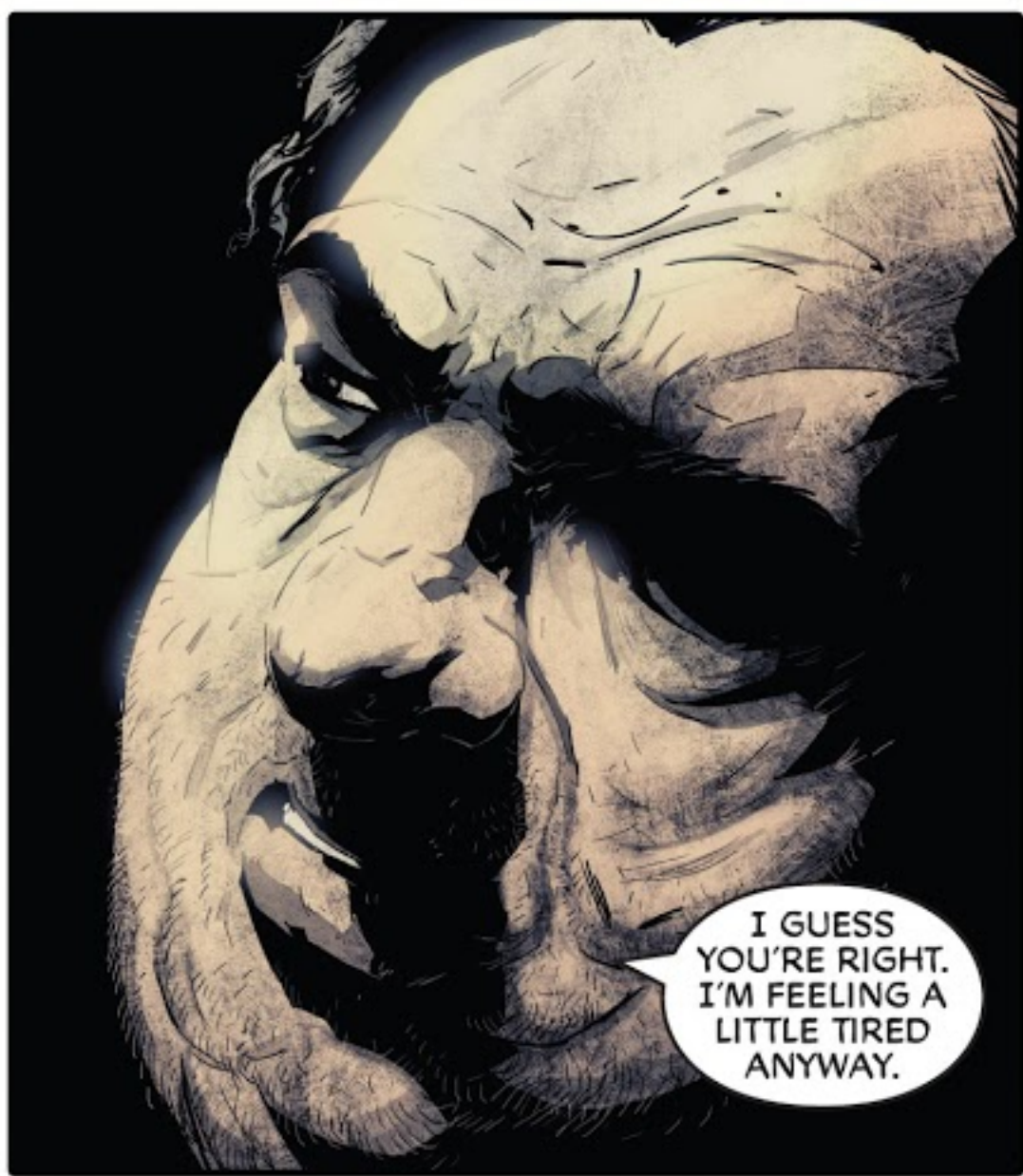
THE WHOLE TIME YOU WERE IN THE HOSPITAL,* DETECTIVE ROWAND AND I WERE TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHO HE MIGHT BE. BUT NEITHER OF US FOUND MUCH. NOR HAS ANYONE ELSE IN THE WORLD FOR THAT MATTER.

SO HE JUST TOUCHES *CRIPPLES AND INVALIDS* THEN THEY'RE CURED?! NOW THAT'S ONE *HELLUVA* TALENT. TOO BAD YOU COULDN'T DO THAT, TWITCH-- COULD'VE ZAPPED ME AND GOTTEN ME OUT OF THAT HOSPITAL SOONER. THOUGH THE NURSES WERE OKAY LOOKING. THERE ANY MORE DISCS YOU NEED ME TO WATCH TONIGHT?

I HAVE SOME BACK AT THE OFFICE. I'LL BRING THEM BY TOMORROW. YOU DON'T HAVE TO GET CAUGHT UP ON EVERY ONE TONIGHT. ESPECIALLY SINCE THE DOCTORS SAID YOU NEEDED TO TAKE THINGS EASY FOR A WHILE.

YEAH...

*Since issue 199 -- Todd



I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT. I'M FEELING A LITTLE TIRED ANYWAY.



PROBABLY BECAUSE YOU HAVEN'T EATEN ALL DAY. I STOPPED BY THE CORNER STORE ON THE WAY UP AND GOT WHAT THE DOCTOR RECOMMENDED.

BUT I DON'T WANT TO HEAR YOUR COMPLAINTS.

AND TO SHOW YOU HOW MUCH I ADORE YOU... I'M GOING TO EAT THE SAME DIET YOU HAVE TO UNTIL YOU'RE BETTER.

OH-- GIMME A BREAK! YOU LOVE ALL THAT 'SKINNY PEOPLE' CRAP THEY CALL FOOD. YOU'RE NOT SACRIFICING ANYTHING! BUT SOME OF US AREN'T BUILT FOR LOW CARBS AND GREEN ROUGHAGE TWENTY-FOUR HOURS A DAY! BESIDES... IT GIVES ME 'THE RUNS.'

I THINK I EVEN 'SHARTED' MY PANTS YESTERDAY.

YOU NEARLY DIED, SAM. YOU'RE AWARE OF THAT? THEY SAID YOU WERE *CLINICALLY DEAD* FOR OVER THIRTY SECONDS.* SO YOU WANT TO MAKE LIGHT OF THAT-- THEN FINE-- GO AHEAD. BUT I LIKE YOU AS MY PARTNER. SO EXCUSE ME IF I TAKE YOUR HEART PROBLEMS MORE SERIOUS THAN YOU DO.

* Issue 218 -- Todd



C'MON, TWITCH. I WAS KIDDING.

YOU'RE SUCH A *GIRL* SOMETIMES.

I WAS JUST COMMENTING ON HAVING TO EAT ANOTHER OF THESE ASSWIPE SALADS. AND I...

I LIKE BEING YOUR PARTNER TOO.

SO NOW THAT WE'VE GOTTEN THE 'BROMANCE' OUT OF THE WAY, WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THIS DOWNING DUDE?

MOST OF WHAT WE KNOW IS IN THE FILES I BROUGHT-- READ THEM AT YOUR LEISURE. BUT THERE'S STILL A COUPLE THINGS THAT ARE BUGGING ME.



SUCH AS?



FOR STARTERS, I BELIEVE THE ATTEMPT ON YOUR LIFE AT THE HOSPITAL IS SOMEHOW CONNECTED TO DOWNING.*

AND BEFORE YOU ASK... YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE I'VE SAID THIS TO.

I BELIEVE DOWNING'S POWERS POSE A THREAT TO SOME. THE WAY THEY'RE ATTACKING HIM, I BELIEVE, IS BY ATTACKING THOSE CLOSE TO HIM.

*Issue 211 --Todd

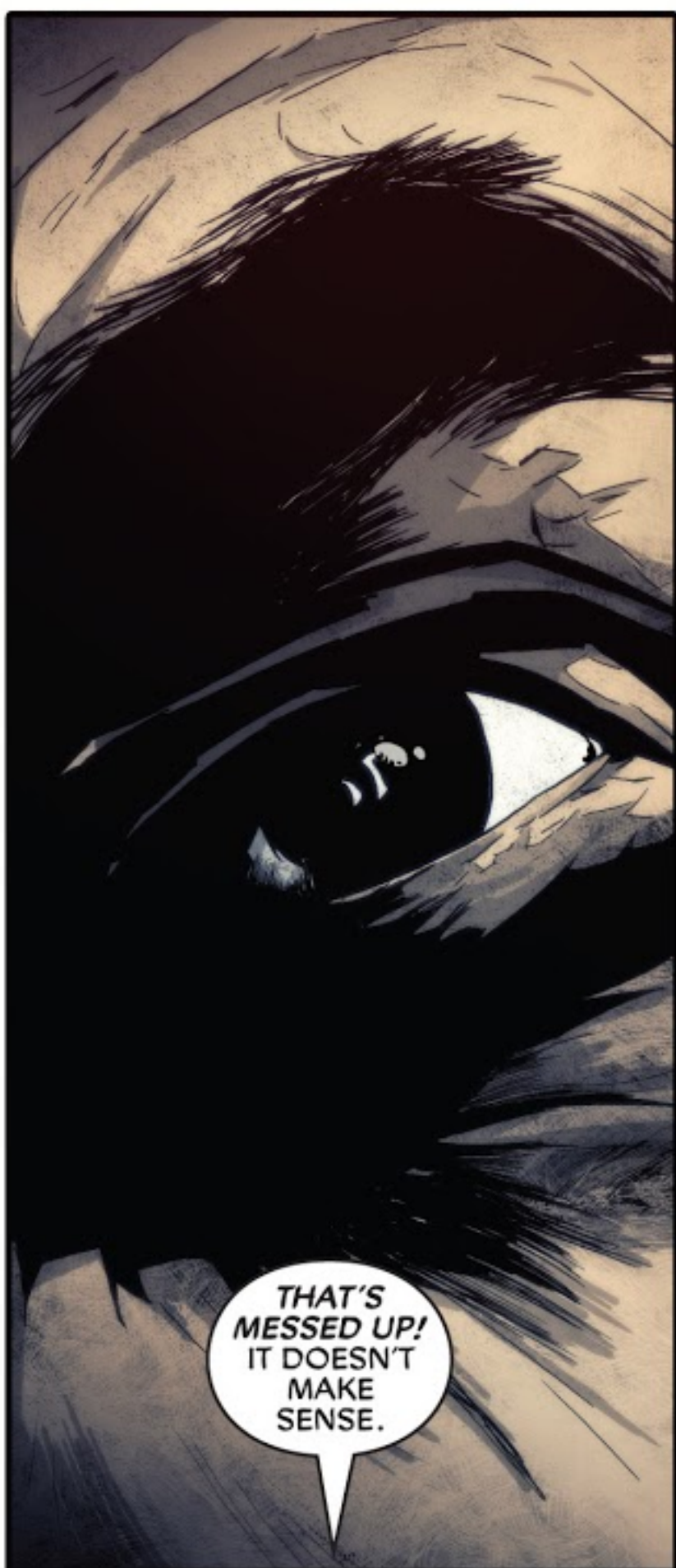


WHAT'RE YOU TALKING ABOUT?! I'VE NEVER MET THE GUY!



BUT I HAVE.

SO THE BEST WAY TO GET TO DOWNING MIGHT BE TO GET TO ME. AND THE BEST WAY TO GET TO ME IS THROUGH YOU. THAT'S *HOW DEEP* THIS ALL GOES. THEY DON'T CARE HOW MANY LAYERS THEY NEED TO GO THROUGH AS LONG AS IT LEADS BACK TO DOWNING.



THAT'S MESSED UP! IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE.



WELL... THIS SHOULD THRILL YOU THEN.





I'm so...
lost... so
confused.

Please..

Give me the
strength-- because
I don't know where
else to turn. You're
the only hope
I have left.

I know you
chose me to watch
over him-- and I've done
that with all my heart. I
just don't know why. Why
make me fall in love with
someone who doesn't...
feel the same way?



Can he be
changed?



"I know he wants
to... I just don't
trust that he will.

"I've lost
faith in him."

And because
you sent him to
me-- does that
mean I'm losing
my faith... in
you too?

Or is it
me? I
don't know
anymore.



God...
please...
please help
me.

I knew what I was supposed to do-- what to feel when he was in his coma. His spirit and yours were so very strong.

And I needed that. I needed both of you in my life...



"Because everyone close to me had abandoned me-- and when you sent him to me --it was a gift I wasn't worthy of receiving."



"But you blessed me with a friend who listened to all my fears. All my pain."



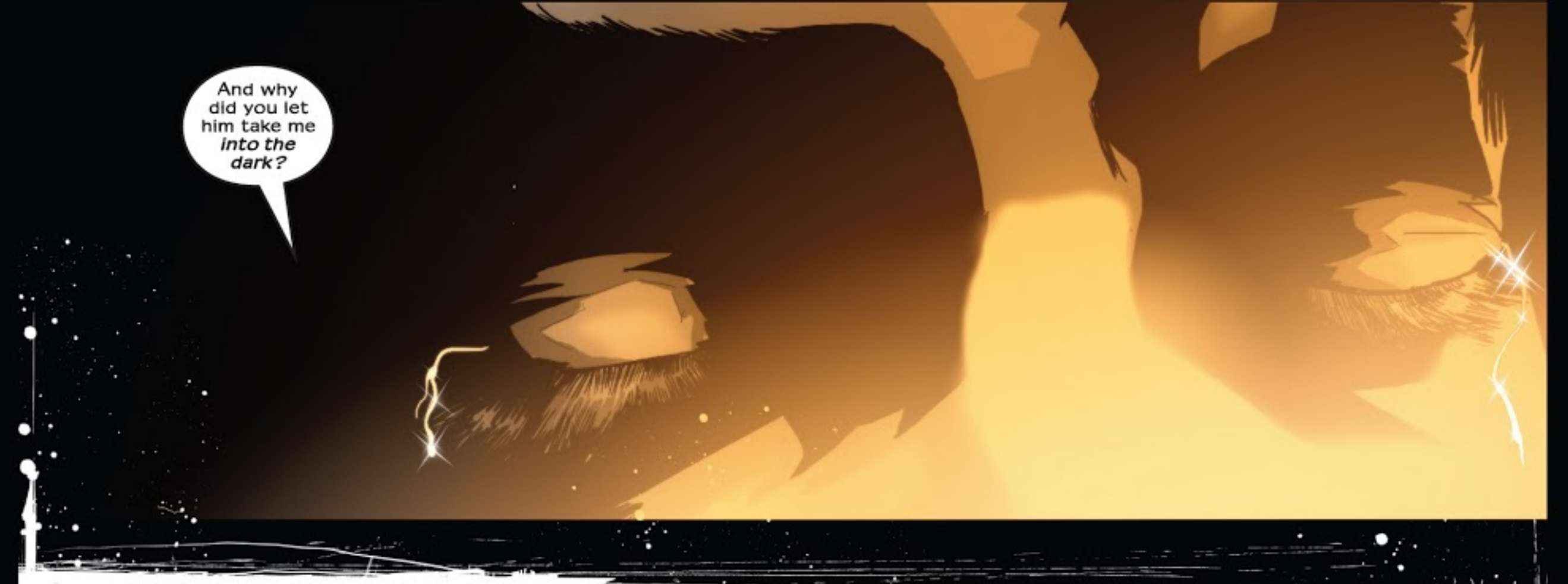
"It was perfect."



Why?

Why did you make him wake up?





And why
did you let
him take me
*into the
dark?*



"Until then I loved him... with
every fiber in my body. But he
took me into the darkness... and
God help me... I haven't
stopped being scared since.

"I couldn't see
or hear anything.
But I felt it!"



It was all
around me.
Everywhere!

And now
I don't know who
to trust any-
more or why I'm
even feeling like
this.

I keep fighting it-- but I don't know what side I'm going to fall to. Like Jim... light and darkness are trying to *steal* my soul.

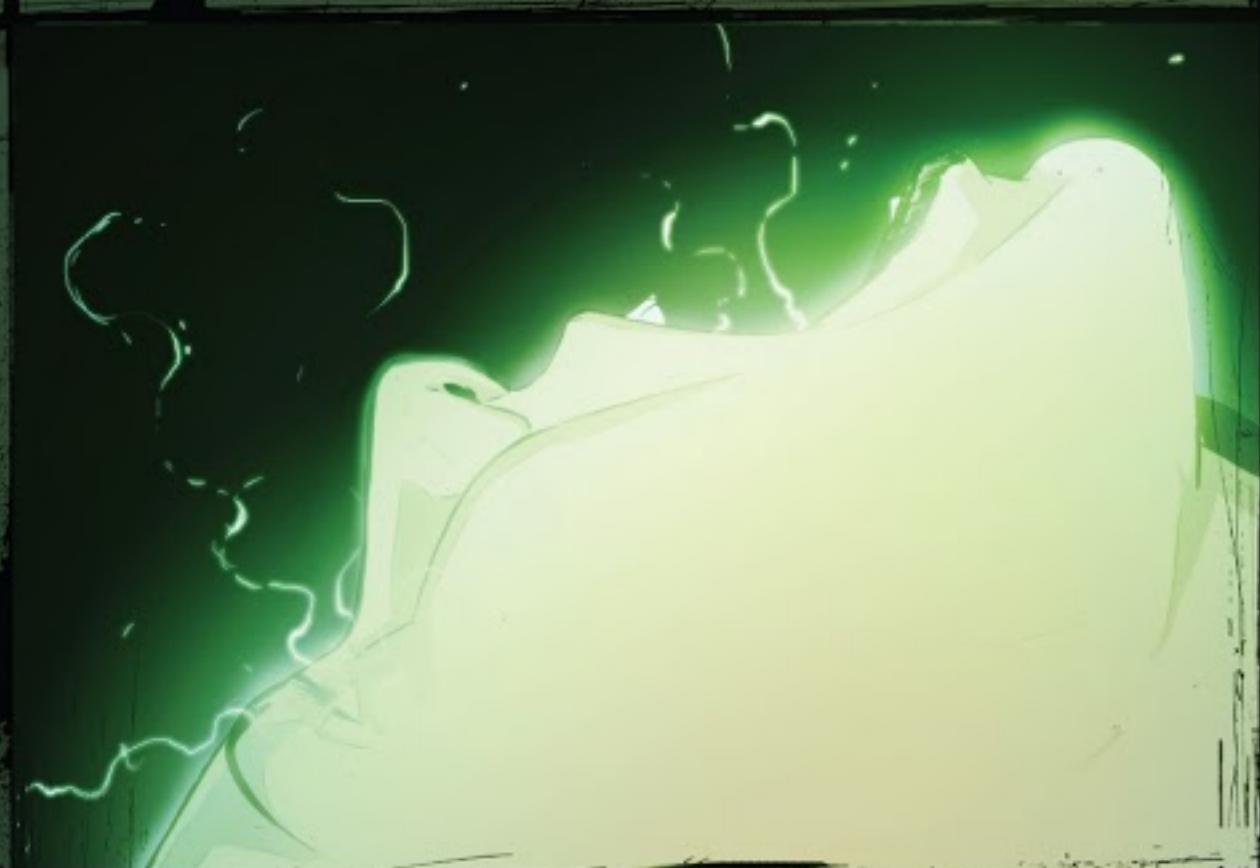
And I don't know if I can live with *both* inside me at the same time.

I'm not Jim.
His actions show
that he has so much love--
so much light. But he lives
with darkness too. I can't
do that. I'm not as
strong as him.

Please,
Lord...
give me
strength.











LOOK, SUSAN, NOT NOW. I NEED TO MAKE SOME CALLS.

* Issue 202--Todd



I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS. IT WAS A MISTAKE WHAT WE DID.

* See issue 213.



WHY DO THEY KEEP DOING IT?



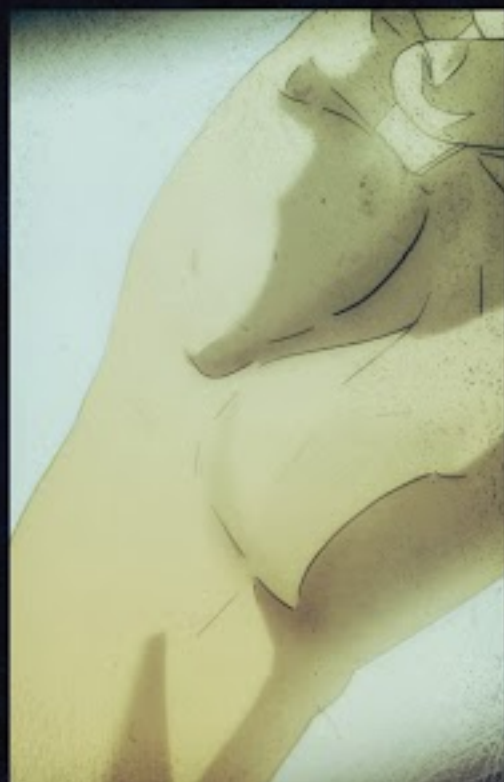
GODDAMMIT! ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR MIND?! THERE IS NO US! WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?*

* See issue 217.



WHY DO THEY KEEP... HURTING ME?









CELEBRITY SAVIOR: PART 1!

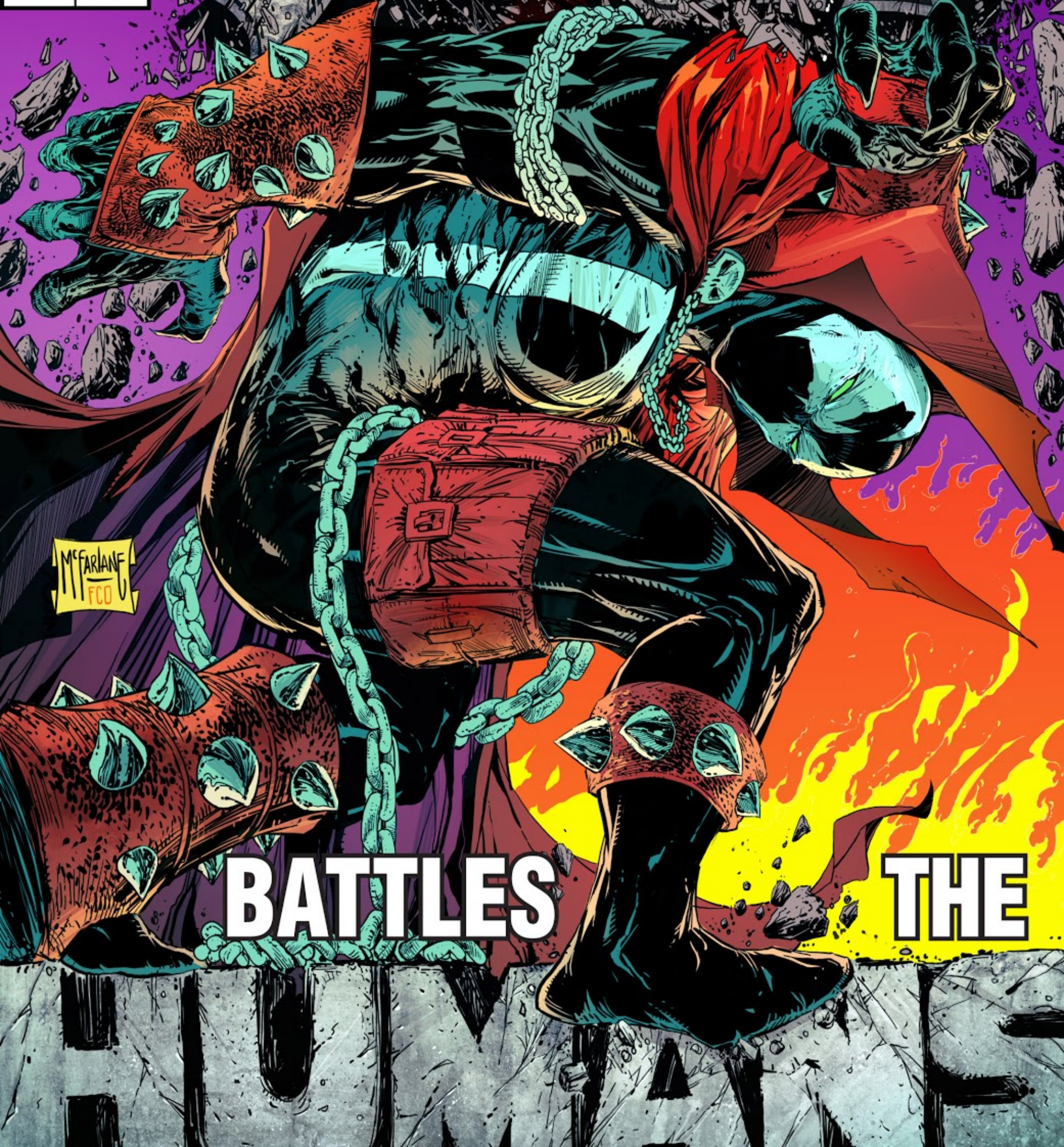
APPROVED
BY THE
IMAGE
COMICS
AUTHORITY

IMAGE
COMICS
GROUP

DIGITAL
EDITION

229

MAR



McFARIANE
FCO

BATTLES

THE



Hllspwn: Dudes!! Figured it out over the weekend.

AngelsROK: Let me guess...you found another HELLSPAWN

Hllspwn:
U got it!

Redeemer69:
Please...enlighten us

Hllspwn: It came to me in my dreams last night... our new global celeb DOWNING is a Hellspawn!! He's hiding it from every1

AngelsROK: WTF!!! How many does that make for you now? 77 or 78 Spawns? I've lost count ever since you decided that LeBRON is the new Hellspawn not KOBE.

Hllspwn: It is LEBRON!!! Kobe was a fraud. Look at how Lakers are playing! Not even the best team in LA.

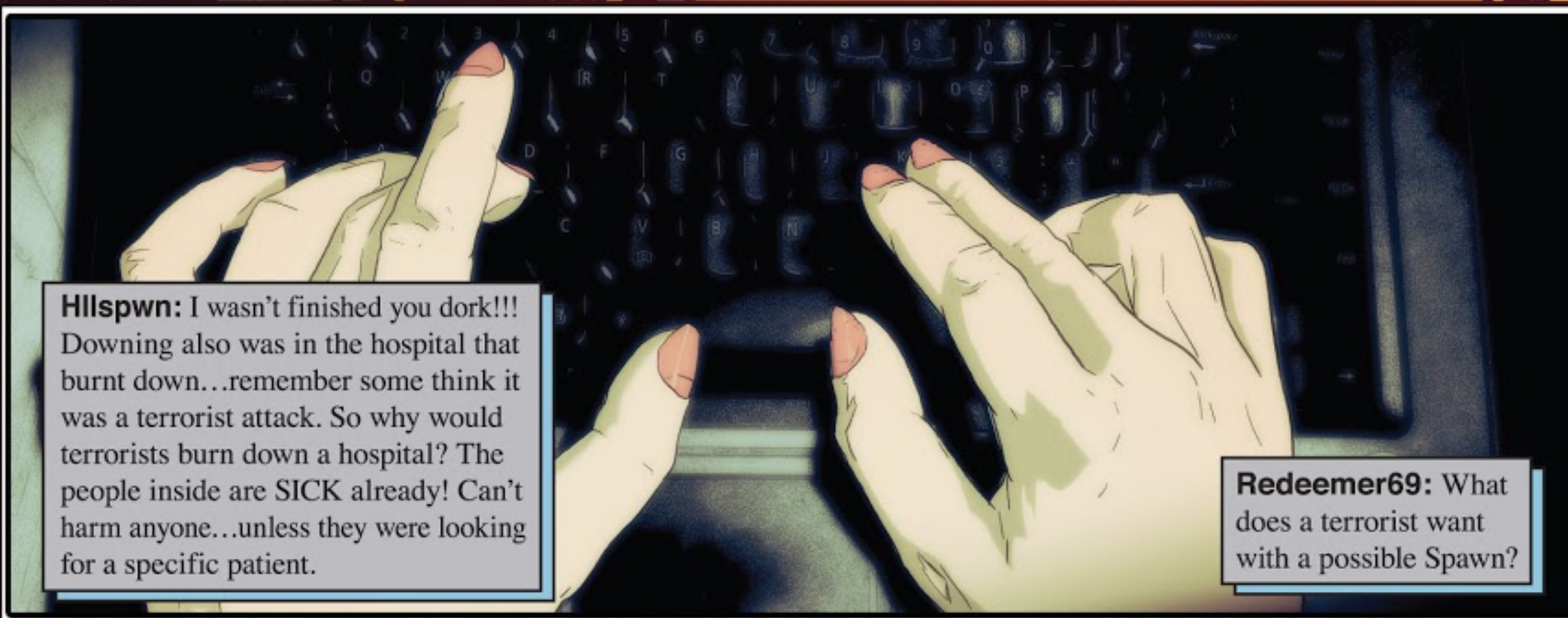
Redeemer69: Nuke the sports talk and tell us your facts for Downing. Other than what everyone already knows.



Hllspwn: Think about it...DOWNING has no past!! I checked news sites and found that he came out of his coma the SAME day as that weird green light over NYC.* **Feds** never told us what it was. WHY????!! Becuz they R hiding something. And green is the same color as SPAWN's eyes!!

*Issue 185 --Todd

Angels ROK:
OMG! Matching eye colors!!! That's it????????????? You're a moron!



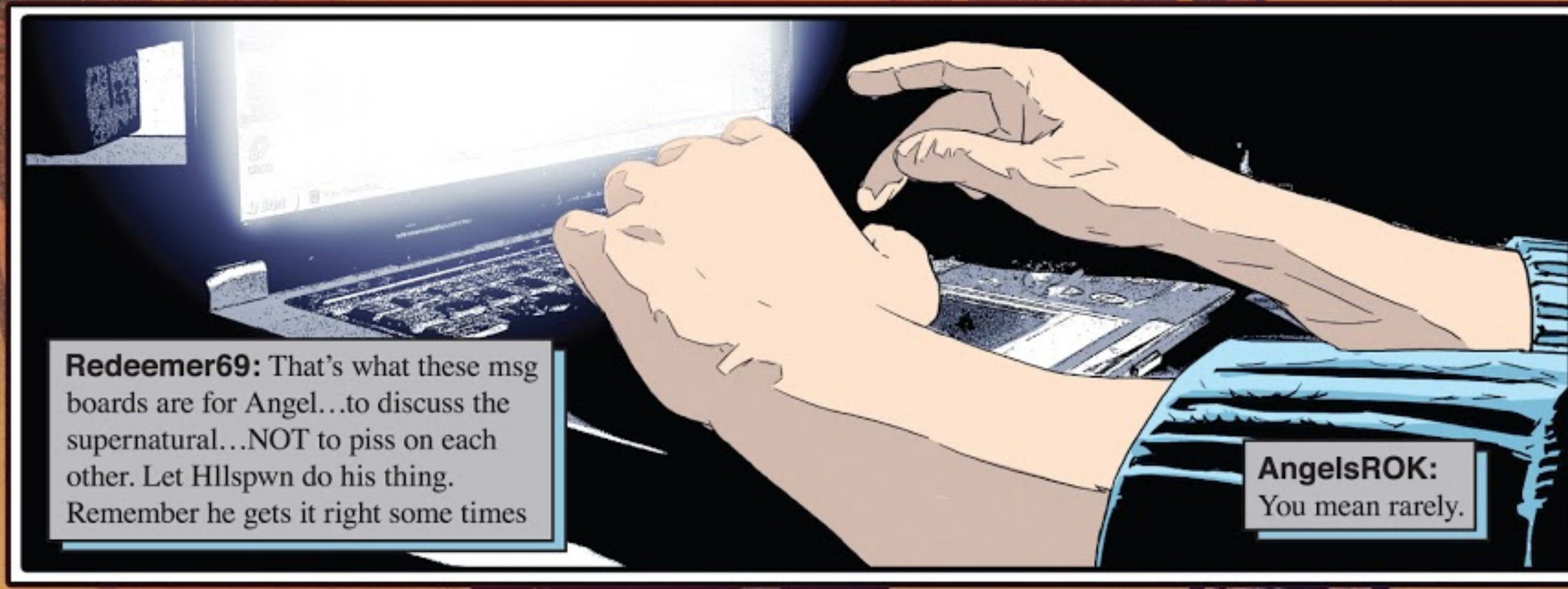
Hllspwn: I wasn't finished you dork!!! Downing also was in the hospital that burnt down...remember some think it was a terrorist attack. So why would terrorists burn down a hospital? The people inside are SICK already! Can't harm anyone...unless they were looking for a specific patient.

Redeemer69: What does a terrorist want with a possible Spawn?



Hllspwn: I DON'T THINK IT WAS TERROISTS...I think it was God hunting down the new Hellspawn. His angels always know when NEW evil pops up. If Downing comes out of his coma with Hell powers then Heaven would need 2 kill him.

AngelsROK: So God kills everyone in a hospital to find ONE demon????? This is why I hate the internet. Becuz of crazies like you!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! I bet you sleep in your own shit on the floor



Redeemer69: That's what these msg boards are for Angel...to discuss the supernatural...NOT to piss on each other. Let Hllspwn do his thing. Remember he gets it right some times

AngelsROK:
You mean rarely.

Hllspwn: The question is ... did God kill the new Hellspawn? NO. We saw a picture of him in the newspapers. So how could a Hellspawn hide himself from God all this time??? Unless he was in disguise. And what would be the best disguise for a demon to take?

AngelsROK: I know. A basketball player like Lebron or Kobe

Hllspwn: No!!! And I know you're making fun of me for getting it wrong with KOBE...but JORDAN was a Hllspwn FOR SURE!!!! How else do U explain those moves he had????????

Redeemer69: Can we pleeze stay on topic

Hllspwn: Here is the answer: The best disguise for a Demon to take is that of an Angel!! Duh! The reason God can't find the Hellspawn is because he is acting like an Angel. That's why Downing is doing all those nice things like helping sick people and building his foundation and acting so nice on TV. If he acts GOOD they won't know he is right in front of them.

AngelsROK: Angels R smarter than that. They sense evil. It doesn't matter how someone looks. It's what's inside that counts

Redeemer69: But what if the Spawn has some good mixed inside him?

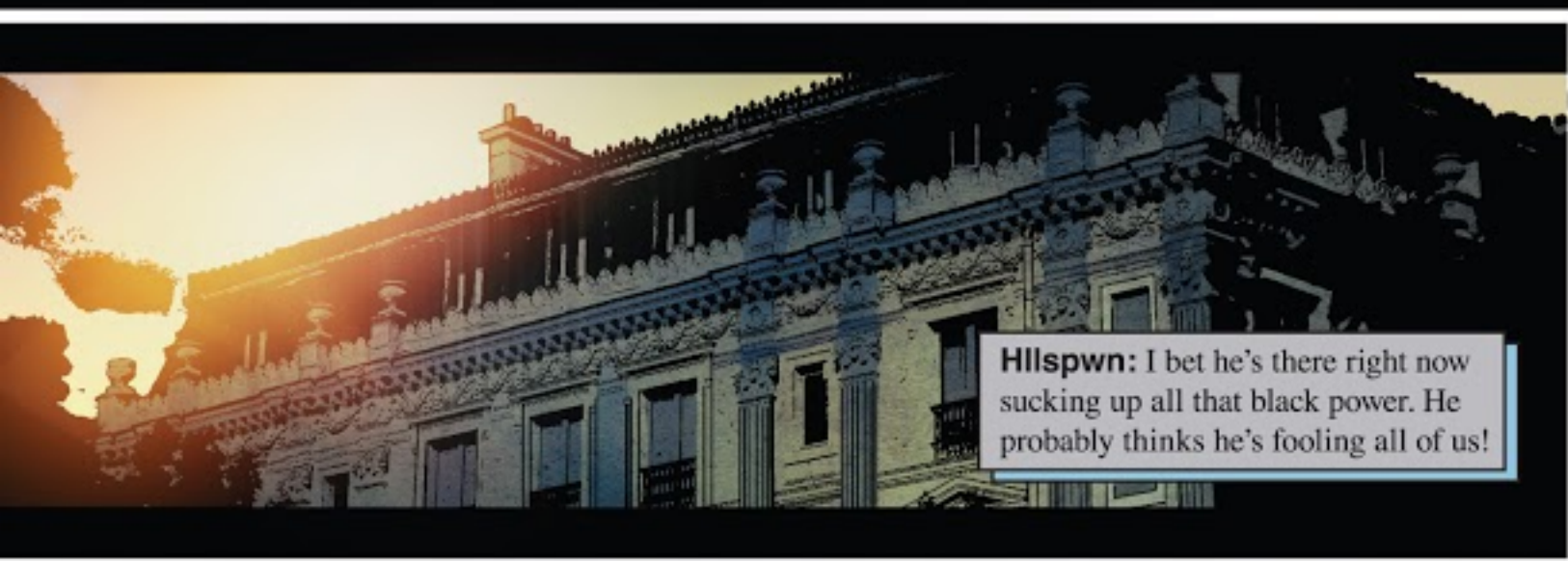
Hllspwn: Exactly. That would throw off the scent...like in the Walking Dead show when Rick and Glenn rubbed zombie blood on themselves so they could walk next to the other zombies and not get eaten.

So maybe Jim Downing is a hybrid. Good and evil mixed together. That's why he does the good things. But other spawns have hidden themselves in the alleys and now Downing's charity has bought some of the alleyways. I think he didn't buy that property to fix it up. I think he bought it so he could hide where he lives.

Redeemer69: I thought he lived in a penthouse now...?

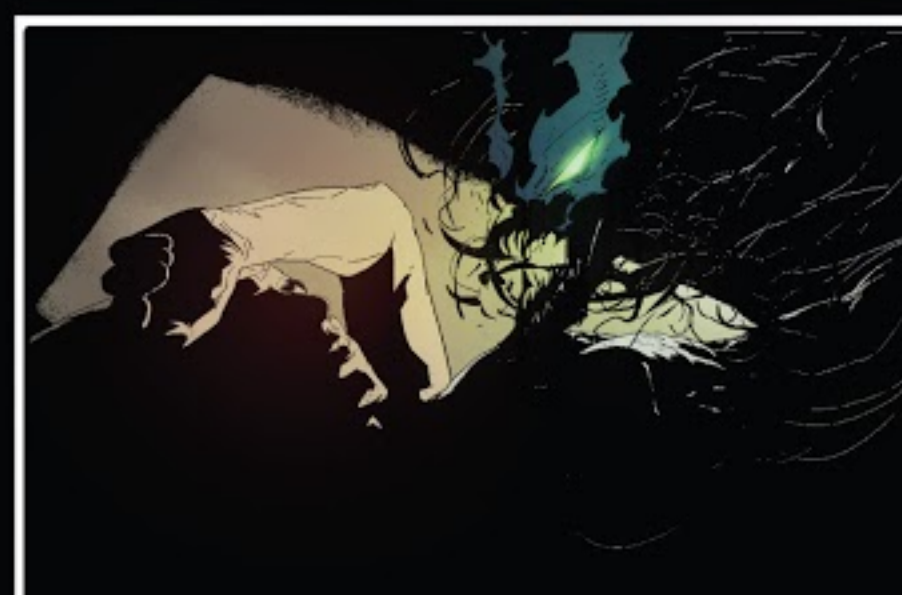
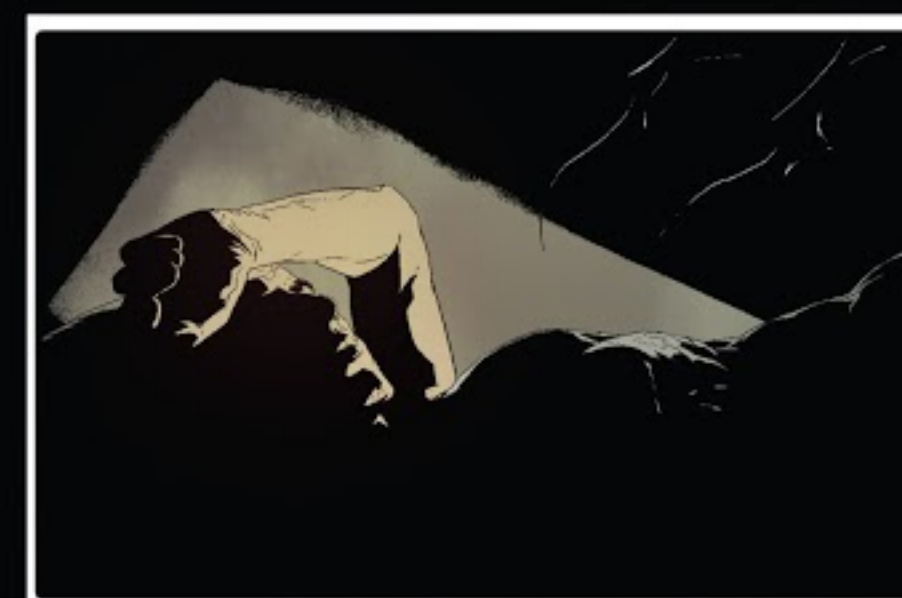
Hllspwn: That's what the reporters R telling us. I think he is faking all of us and he actually sleeps in the alleys where there's nothing but shadows. Hellspawns feed off darkness!!!!





Hllspwn: I bet he's there right now sucking up all that black power. He probably thinks he's fooling all of us!

Hllspwn: And Bcuz the public is so stupid I'm sure he goes to bed with a smile on his face and sleeps like a baby.



"I HUNGER,
DOWNING."

"IT'S TIME... TO
FEED AGAIN."



BECAUSE I'M
THE ONE THAT GIVES YOU
POWER!!

AND WHEN
NIGHT FALLS--
WHILE YOU SLEEP--
I FEED!
THAT'S THE ONLY
PURPOSE YOU SERVE
FOR ME... IS TO BE
MY HOST!

AND THE PAIN I INFLICT BECOMES NOTHING BUT A VAGUE MEMORY TO YOU WITH EACH SUNRISE.

BY DEVOURING
AS MUCH EVIL AS I
CAN. YOU'RE NOT THE
ONE THEY'RE AFRAID OF--
IT'S ME!!

IT'S MY
EXISTENCE THAT
SCARES CLOWN. HE
KNOWS THAT SOME DAY
SOON I'LL UNLEASH MY
FULL POWER AND THERE'S
NOTHING HEAVEN OR
HELL CAN DO TO
STOP IT!



MR. THOMPSON... PLEASE FILL THEM IN.

THANKS, MR. RAMUS.

AS YOU GENTLEMEN ARE AWARE-- OUR GROUP HAS BEEN RECEIVING ALL INCOMING EMAIL REQUESTS FROM YOUR FOUNDATION'S WEBSITE. THE TRAFFIC TO THE SITE HAS BEEN OVERWHELMING, TO SAY THE LEAST. WE'VE HAD FOUR SERVER CRASHES THIS MONTH ALREADY DUE TO HUGE DEMAND.

NOT SURPRISINGLY, PAGE VIEWS WENT THROUGH THE ROOF IMMEDIATELY AFTER MR. DOWNING'S APPEARANCE ON T.V. WHEN HE WAS SHOT.*

* Issue 215 -- Todd

THAT INCIDENT HAS BEEN AN ENORMOUS BOON-- MAKING YOUR NAME THE SINGLE LARGEST SEARCH ON GOOGLE RECENTLY.

THAT'S GREAT.

WE AGREE. AS OF TODAY WE'VE RECEIVED OVER TWELVE THOUSAND EMAILS ASKING FOR YOUR HELP OR SOME TYPE OF ASSISTANCE.

SICK

THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN NEED IS HEART WRENCHING. WHICH IS WHY WE THINK YOU'LL WANT **TRIPLE** THE STAFF YOU INITIALLY REQUESTED.

CANCER

SON

PAIN

MOTHER

HELP



UNFORTUNATELY, THINGS HAVEN'T ALL BEEN POSITIVE.

HOW SO?



WE'VE ALSO RECEIVED A HIGH VOLUME OF DEATH THREATS AIMED AT MR. DOWNING OR THOSE ASSOCIATED WITH HIM.



BECAUSE OF HIS '*SPECIAL*' POWERS AND RELIGIOUS IMPLICATIONS HE'S BECOME A POLARIZING FIGURE IN SOME CIRCLES. WE BELIEVE THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE THREATS ARE HARMLESS AND ARE COMING FROM PEOPLE SITTING IN CHAT ROOMS OR WRITING BLOGS TRYING TO MAKE A REPUTATION FOR THEMSELVES.

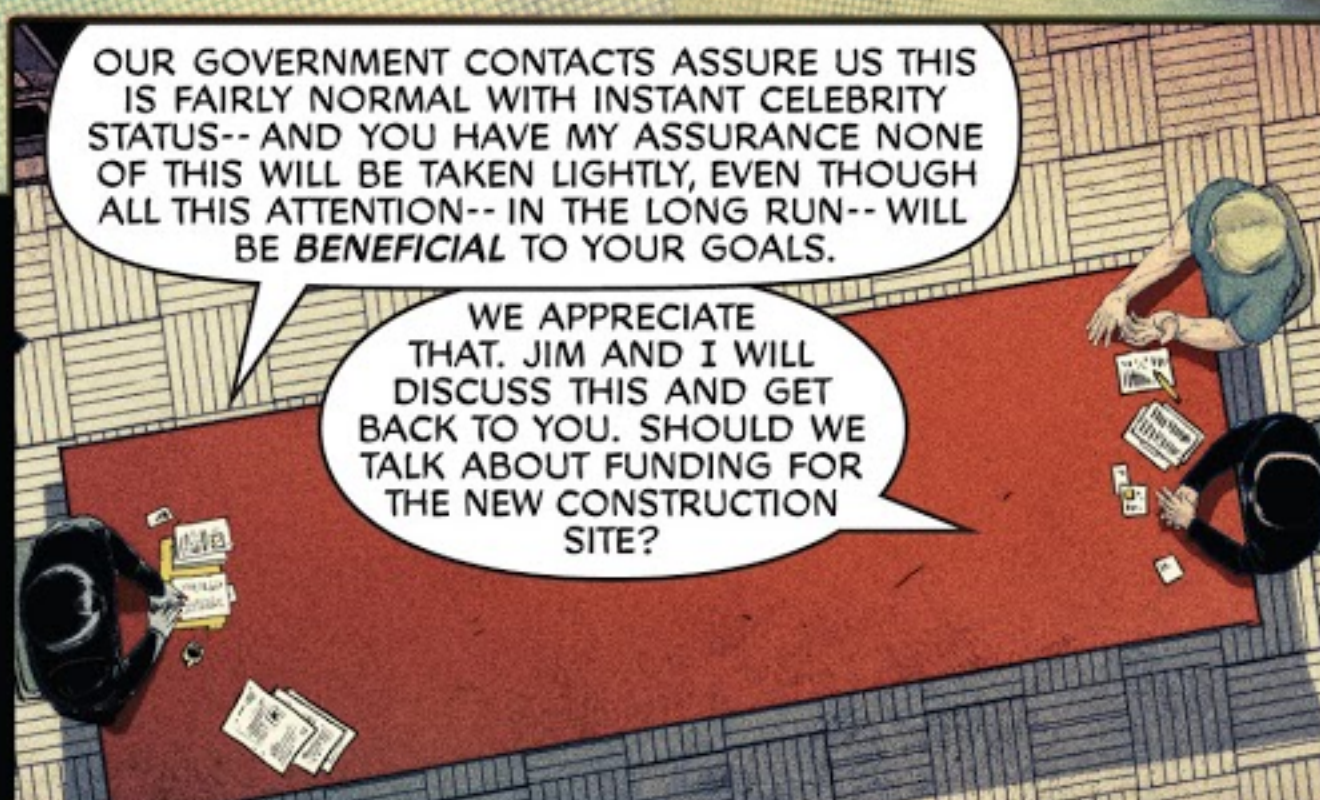
BUT SINCE WE WANT TO BE **ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN**-- WE'VE HANDED THE EMAILS OVER TO THE F.B.I. THEY'VE SUGGESTED WE BEEF UP ALL SECURITY FOR THE NEXT LITTLE WHILE.

UGLY
FAKE
DEAL
WVFL
SCAN
KILL



THAT'S WHY I WANTED THIS MEETING...

SO JIM COULD HEAR THIS ALL FIRST-HAND.



OUR GOVERNMENT CONTACTS ASSURE US THIS IS FAIRLY NORMAL WITH INSTANT CELEBRITY STATUS-- AND YOU HAVE MY ASSURANCE NONE OF THIS WILL BE TAKEN LIGHTLY, EVEN THOUGH ALL THIS ATTENTION-- IN THE LONG RUN-- WILL BE **BENEFICIAL** TO YOUR GOALS.

WE APPRECIATE THAT. JIM AND I WILL DISCUSS THIS AND GET BACK TO YOU. SHOULD WE TALK ABOUT FUNDING FOR THE NEW CONSTRUCTION SITE?



WE CAN, IF MR. DOWNING IS COMFORTABLE MOVING ON?

GO AHEAD.

THE INSURANCE BONDS FOR THE PROJECT HAVE BEEN GIVEN FINAL APPROVAL BY MY FINANCIAL BOARD AND THE MONEY FROM A FEW ONGOING BUSINESSES WILL UNDERWRITE A SIGNIFICANT PORTION OF THE BUDGET. THE ONLY THINGS WE'LL REQUIRE FROM YOUR END ARE...



SO?

WHAT'S YOUR THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT THEY SAID IN THERE? YOU KNOW... ABOUT THE EMAIL THREATS.

DON'T KNOW. I'M STILL THINKING ABOUT IT.

WHAT'S TO THINK ABOUT?! YOU'VE ALREADY BEEN SHOT ONCE!



BUT, I DIDN'T DIE. PEOPLE WILL KNOW THAT DOESN'T WORK.

ARE YOU CRAZY?!!



YOU THINK BECAUSE SOME WHACK JOB DIDN'T KILL YOU THE FIRST TIME-- ANOTHER KOOK WON'T TRY HARDER THE NEXT GO ROUND?

WHICH YOU MAY BE FINE WITH... BUT THE REST OF US AREN'T QUITE AS BULLETPROOF AS YOU ARE. THE STAFF MIGHT NOT BE AS CAVALIER ABOUT IT.

SPEAKING OF WHICH...



THERE'S YOUR ADORING PUBLIC AGAIN. MY GUESS-- GIVEN WHAT WE HEARD IN THE MEETING-- IT MIGHT BE PRUDENT IF WE WENT OUT THE PRIVATE SECURITY EXIT RAMUS SAID HE TAKES.





ALRIGHT--
BUT RUNNING
AWAY FROM THE PUBLIC
DOESN'T SEEM LIKE
THE BEST WAY TO EARN
THEIR TRUST OR BUILD
A PRODUCTIVE
CHARITY.

IT'S NOT
RUNNING. IT'S
CALLED BEING
SENSIBLE.

JUST-- TRYING
TO SORT A FEW THINGS
OUT ABOUT MY PAST AND
PUTTING A FEW THINGS TO
REST. WHICH REMINDS ME...
THAT PHOTO I GAVE YOU...
DID YOU GET VERY FAR
WITH THAT?

AND I'M SORRY
I DIDN'T BRIEF YOU
IN ADVANCE ABOUT
THIS MEETING BUT YOU'VE
BEEN IMPOSSIBLE TO GET
IN TOUCH WITH. WHAT
HAVE YOU BEEN DOING
WITH YOURSELF?

NOT VERY. IF
YOU'RE REFERRING
TO THAT WEDDING
PHOTO. BUT I'M STILL
WORKING ON A FEW
LEADS ABOUT
YOUR PAST.



DON'T
WORRY
ABOUT IT. YOU
CAN STOP DOING
WHATEVER IT IS
YOU WERE
DOING.

WHAT?
IT
DOESN'T
MATTER TO
ME ANY-
MORE.



SINCE
WHEN?



I'LL
TALK TO
YOU ABOUT
IT LATER.
YOU GO
AHEAD.

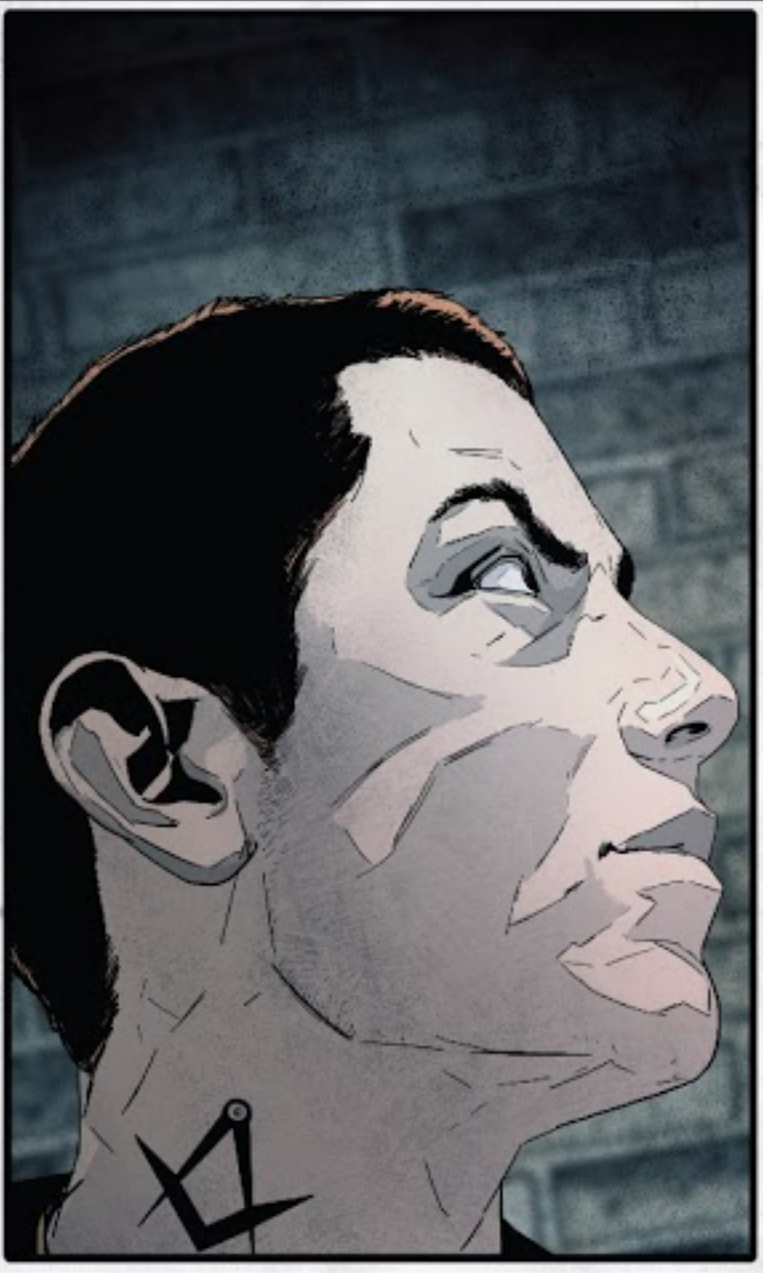


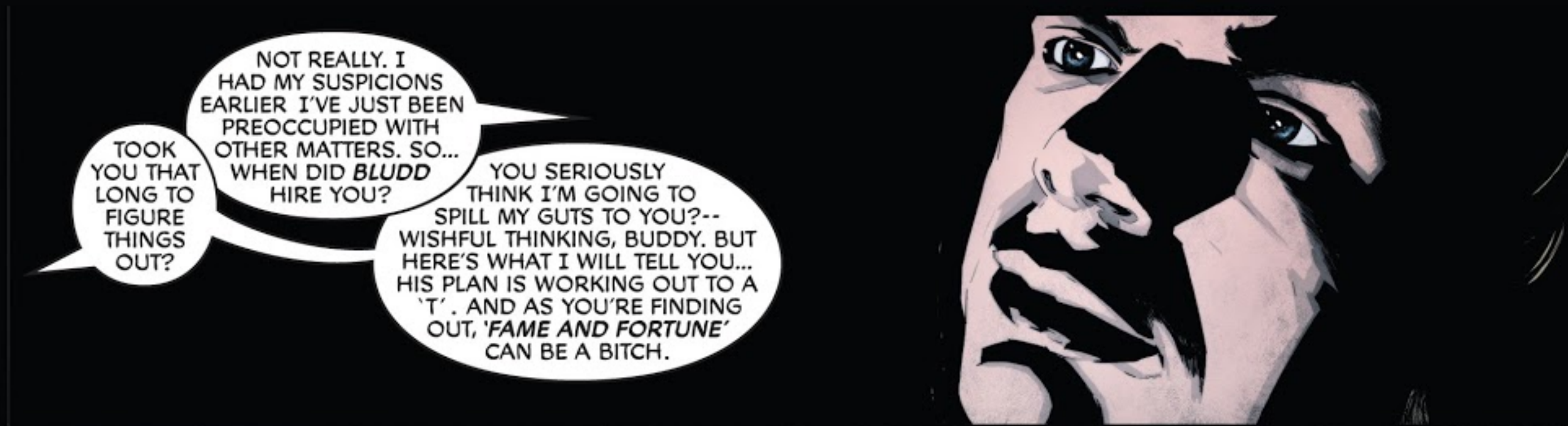
WHY?
WHERE
ARE YOU
GOING?



I'M CURIOUS
ABOUT SOME-
THING RAMUS SAID--
JUST WANTED TO
LOOK INTO
SOMETHING.







TOOK YOU THAT LONG TO FIGURE THINGS OUT?

NOT REALLY. I HAD MY SUSPICIONS EARLIER I'VE JUST BEEN PREOCCUPIED WITH OTHER MATTERS. SO... WHEN DID **BLUDD** HIRE YOU?

YOU SERIOUSLY THINK I'M GOING TO SPILL MY GUTS TO YOU?-- WISHFUL THINKING, BUDDY. BUT HERE'S WHAT I WILL TELL YOU... HIS PLAN IS WORKING OUT TO A 'T'. AND AS YOU'RE FINDING OUT, 'FAME AND FORTUNE' CAN BE A BITCH.



YEAH, I'VE NOTICED THAT. OBVIOUSLY YOUR ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT DIDN'T HELP AND THE CLEVER WAY YOU'VE BUILT A WHOLE STORY ABOUT A DAD JUST WANTING TO HELP HIS LITTLE GIRL. IT'S QUITE CONVINCING. YOU EVEN HAVE THE COPS BELIEVING IT.

BECAUSE IT'S TRUE... AS FAR AS EVERYONE KNOWS.

RIGHT. **BLUDD** THOUGHT OF EVERYTHING. HE PICKS A PERFECT STOOGE-- ONE WHO **ACTUALLY** HAS A DISEASE RIDDEN DAUGHTER SO ALL THE FACTS CHECK OUT WITH THE AUTHORITIES. BUT THEY MISSED SOMETHING, DIDN'T THEY?

NONE OF THEM ASKED WHETHER YOU WERE MOLESTING YOUR FIFTEEN-YEAR OLD DAUGHTER. HOW MANY YEARS YOU BEEN DOING THAT? WHAT? SINCE SHE WAS SIX? SEVEN?



DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT.

SURE YOU DO. SEE, I PAID A VISIT TO YOUR DAUGHTER BEFORE I CAME HERE. TOLD HER I COULDN'T HELP HER UNTIL SHE CLEANSED HERSELF. SHE CRIED THE ENTIRE TIME SHE TOLD ME WHAT YOU'VE BEEN DOING TO HER! AND A FATHER THAT WOULD DO SOMETHING LIKE THAT TO HIS OWN LITTLE GIRL **WOULDN'T HESITATE** EXPLOITING HER FURTHER WHEN SOMEONE LIKE **BLUDD** OR HIS VAMPIRE CREW CAME CALLING.

WHAT WAS IT HE PROMISED TO GIVE YOU BEFORE YOU WERE BITTEN? MONEY? A NEW CAR? OH... LET ME GUESS. HE OFFERED YOU ETERNAL LIFE SO THAT YOU COULD CONTINUE TO MOLEST YOUNG GIRLS FOR ETERNITY. HOW COULD YOU POSSIBLY TURN DOWN SOMETHING LIKE THAT?



NOW WHAT? YOU'RE GOING TO KILL ME? I DON'T THINK SO. YOU KNOW HOW MUCH ATTENTION WOULD COME YOUR WAY IF SOMETHING HAPPENED TO ME? MORE PRESS. IMAGINE THE HEADLINE "GRIEVING DAD IN JAIL FOUND DEAD... WHAT DOES DOWNING THINK?"



IT'S ALL A GAME AND YOU'RE THE STAR. **A RATINGS STAR!** THE MORE ATTENTION ON YOU, THE BETTER FOR **RAMUS**... OR **BLUDD** AS YOU LIKE TO CALL HIM. SO YOU WANT TO DO SOMETHING TO ME THEN YOU'LL JUST BE DOING HIM A FAVOR. YOU KNOW HE MAKES A LOT OF CASH OFF YOU?

NOW GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE!



NEXT TIME YOU TALK TO ONE OF YOUR VAMPIRE FRIENDS-- TELL THEM I'VE GOT A PLAN TOO.



Minutes later.



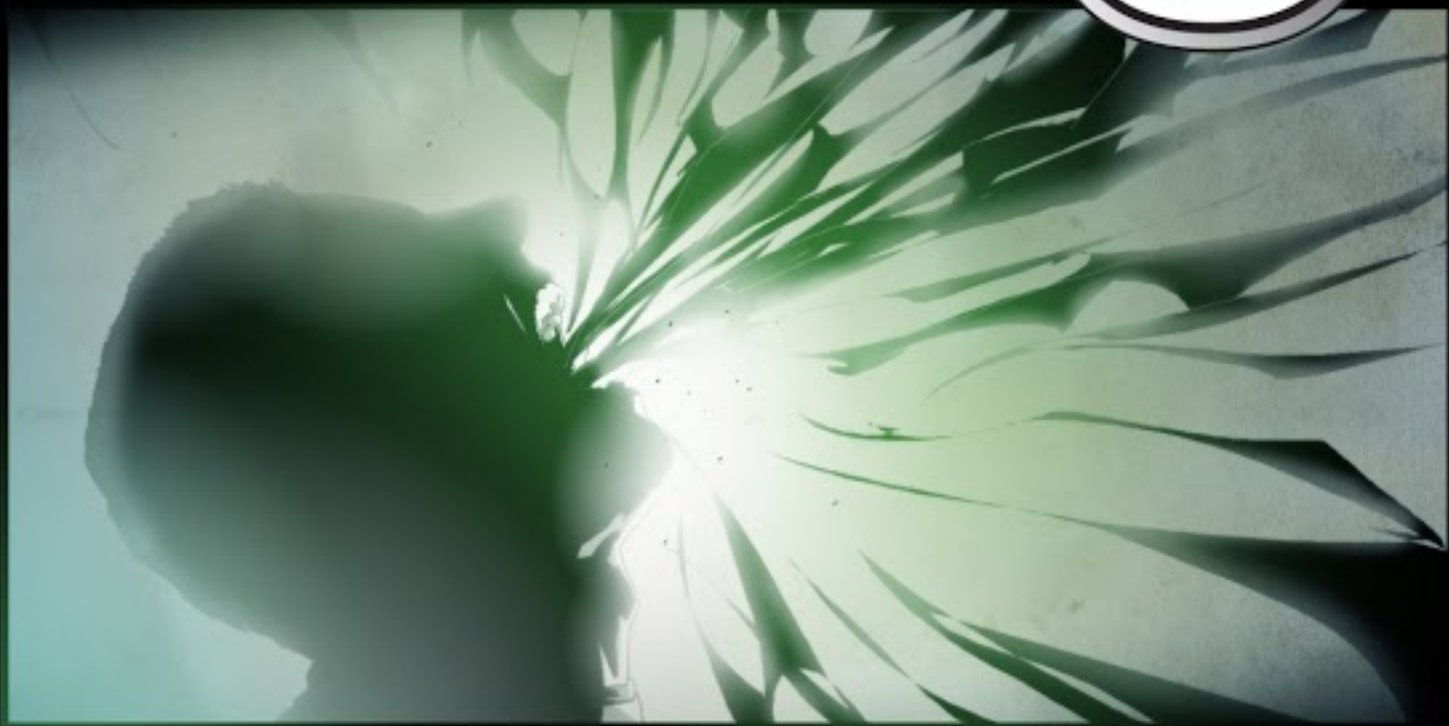
I WANT YOU TO KNOW YOU'RE RIGHT.



DOWNING
DOESN'T HAVE THE
COURAGE TO KILL
YOU.



I'M
NOT
DOWNING!



"AND BLUDD NEEDS TO
LEARN THAT LESSON!"



SOMEONE! GET
SECURITY DOWN TO
'C' BLOCK! I HEAR
SCREAMING!



"BECAUSE **NO ONE** IS
GOING TO CONTROL DOWNING
OTHER THAN ME!"

Somewhere in New Jersey

LOOK AT THIS PLACE--MAN IS IT HOPPING TONIGHT! I SWEAR THIS IS THE CRAZIEST I'VE EVER SEEN IT. AND THESE GIRLS... NOT AN UGLY ONE IN SIGHT. WHAT DO THEY DO? HAVE SECURITY REJECT ANYONE WHO ISN'T AT LEAST A NINE?

CHECK OUT THIS CHICK, SHE'S BEEN WANTING TO GET AT MY BUSINESS ALL NIGHT.

THEY ALL HAVE. YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY STUD HERE.

I'M TELLING YOU I NEARLY WENT OUT OF MY MIND WHEN THE PLACE WAS SHUT DOWN FOR A FEW WEEKS.* I BET THAT DICKHEAD SPAWN DOESN'T EVEN KNOW THIS JOINT'S OPENED AGAIN.

AND THE FOOD HANGING FROM THE RAFTERS... THE SHIT IS JUST TOP NOTCH!

I KNOW WE'VE BEEN DOING THIS FOR A FEW THOUSAND YEARS... BUT DO YOU THINK WE'LL EVER GET USED TO THIS?

WHAT KIND OF QUESTION IS THAT?

I DON'T KNOW. I MEAN WE'RE YOUNG AND EVERYTHING, BUT WHAT IF WE, LIKE, GET MATURE OR SOMETHING DOWN THE LINE? YOU THINK WE'D STILL WANT TO DO COOL SHIT LIKE THIS?

WHY'RE YOU ASKING THIS NOW?

WHAT'S WRONG... YOU DON'T EVER THINK OF STUFF LIKE THIS?

NO-- I MEANT WHY ARE YOU ASKING ME THIS AFTER *ALL THIS* TIME?! REMEMBER YOU'VE BEEN DOING THIS FOR CENTURIES. WHY DIDN'T YOU BRING THIS UP SAY A HUNDRED OR TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO?

IT ISN'T THE SAME! THERE WASN'T ANY ELECTRICITY BACK THEN AND THE FOOD WAS CRAP-- AND DON'T TALK TO ME ABOUT THE BUILDINGS. THAT WHOLE RENAISSANCE ERA WAS SO OVER-HYPED. THE SEX AND ORGIES WERE GREAT, BUT THE REST OF IT, AND THE NEXT COUPLE OF GENERATIONS... I SWEAR I WOULD HAVE DIED TEN TIMES OVER IF I WASN'T IMMORTAL.

I THINK YOU'RE DRUNK.

WHAT'S THAT GOT TO DO WITH ANYTHING?

And you're right, I am smashed.

MAYBE WE SHOULD JUST TALK SPORTS. DID YOU READ THAT BLOG LAST MONTH ABOUT MICHAEL JORDAN BEING A DEMON? I JUST ABOUT PISSED MYSELF.



ENOUGH!

NOW
STRAIGHTEN UP...
LOOK WHO'S
COMING TO PAY
US A VISIT.

I
HATE
THAT
DUDE!

YOU HATE
EVERYONE.



HOW'S
YOUR EVENING
GOING,
GENTLEMEN?

YOU
FIND OUR
BROTHER?



THAT
DEPENDS.

I'LL TAKE
THAT AS A 'NO.' BUT
YOU SAID YOU WERE GOING
TO FIND HIM AND-- SILLY US-- WE
ACTUALLY THOUGHT YOU
MEANT IT. I MEAN WE'VE DONE
A BUNCH OF FAVORS FOR YOU,
SO WHY WOULD WE THINK
YOU'D WANT TO DO JUST
ONE FOR US?

I'M NOT HAVING
THIS CONVERSATION WITH
THE LADIES STILL HERE.
I'LL BE OUTSIDE.

ALL RIGHT
GIRLS-- YOU HEARD
THE MAN. GET
DRESSED AND LEAVE
US ALONE.

HEAR
WHAT I SAID?
GET OFF ME!



GODDAMNIT,
BITCH! I DON'T
ASK TWICE!





SO--
WHAT'S
UP?

YOU ALREADY
KNOW ABOUT CLOWN
AND HIS RECRUITING
EFFORTS-- FOR THE TIME
BEING HE DOESN'T
POSE A THREAT BUT HE
TOLD ME COGLIOSTRO'S
RETURNED.

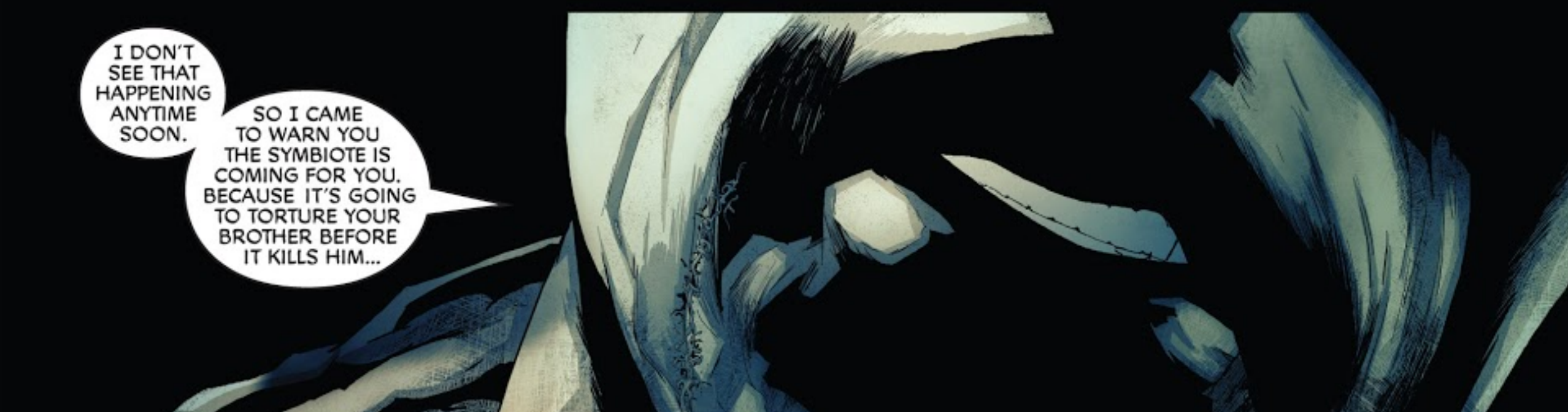


THAT MAY
COMPLICATE WHAT
WE'RE TRYING TO DO
BECAUSE IF SPAWN
DECIDES TO JOIN HIS SIDE,
COG WILL TEACH HIM TRICKS
ON HOW TO SURVIVE
ATTACKS WITHOUT
DRAINING HIS POWERS
SO QUICKLY.



THAT'S WHERE YOUR
BROTHER COMES IN. AND
WHERE OUR *BIGGEST* PROBLEM
LAYS. YOU THOUGHT SPAWN
SWALLOWED HIM INTO THE
DARKNESS. I THINK IT WAS
THE SYMBIOTE.

IT'S BEGUN
ASSERTING ITSELF--
KILLING AT AN ALARMING
RATE. AND IF THAT'S TRUE IT
MEANS THE PORTAL TO WHERE
YOUR BROTHER HAS BEEN
LOCKED IN WON'T OPEN
AGAIN UNTIL DOWNING FINDS
A WAY TO TAKE FULL
CONTROL OVER HIS
ARMOR.



I DON'T
SEE THAT
HAPPENING
ANYTIME
SOON.

SO I CAME
TO WARN YOU
THE SYMBIOTE IS
COMING FOR YOU.
BECAUSE IT'S GOING
TO TORTURE YOUR
BROTHER BEFORE
IT KILLS HIM...



AND
THAT'S WHEN
IT'LL FIND OUT
WHAT YOU DID
TO IT SO LONG
AGO.

